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**Reclaiming the “D” Word: The Ministry of Diakonia in the Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America**

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Reclaiming the “D” Word: The Ministry of Diakonia in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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Dedication Page

This work is dedicated to all of the deacons, deaconesses and other diaconal workers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The work of diakonia is a communal effort and I am grateful to the Deaconess Community of the ELCA for all of their support, wisdom and guidance as it pertains to living out my diaconal call in this world.

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Abstract

The role of the diaconate is at the same time one of the most misunderstood and most promising ministries of the church. Diakonia is a service ministry that has been in existence since the early church. Throughout history, deacons and deaconesses carried out the ministry of diakonia in both the church and secular arenas. While most of our congregations in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America have different types of service ministries, most do not grasp the full understanding of diakonia. The role of the deacon in the church remains elusive to many congregations and many synods and bishops have not supported the deacons in the way pastors are supported. This project is an exploration of the total expression of the ministry of diakonia and the role of the professional deacon as it pertains to this important service ministry. The final chapter will also give resources to use for educating on diakonia, how to put diakonia into action and the role of the professional deacon.

Central Terms

Advocacy is strategic public witness together with, and on behalf of, those who are marginalized, vulnerable or whose voices have been silenced.

AMMPARO is a ministry of the ELCA that Accompanies Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities.

Church is a collective term that encompasses individual synods, congregations and leaders in the ELCA. According to Martin Luther, “The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught, and the Sacraments are rightly administered.”¹

Congregations are local worshipping bodies that adhere to the bylaws and constitution of the ELCA. The Congregation is the place where the liturgy of worship occurs, Christian education takes place and the hands-on work of service is carried out.

Consecration is the liturgical rite of setting apart a person to the ministry of word and service or deacon/deaconess. Consecration was the rite until January of 2019 when ordination replaced consecration.

Deacon is a minister of word and service; a minister who bridges church and world. (From the Greek – Diakonos which means service) This is a professional rostered office in the ELCA which required a seminary degree, Clinical Pastoral Education and an internship. The ministry of the diaconate, that is of deacons also called ministers of Word and Service, is recognized by churches throughout history and around the world. The ELCA continues to seek to honor the

¹ “The Augsburg Confession,” The Book of Concord, accessed April 22, 2020, <http://bookofconcord.org/>.

significance of deacons serving at the intersection of church and world, bringing a sharper focus to the ways the church responds to the needs of the people.²

Deaconess is the oldest form of professional diaconal ministry in the ELCA. A deaconess is a member of the Deaconess Community which is a professional group of female deacons. This order traces its roots back to Germany and the first Deaconesses who came to North America. All deaconesses are rostered deacons in the ELCA, but not all deacons are deaconesses.

Diaconal ministry is a broad term for the ministry of the church that bridges the church and the world. This important ministry is interested in bringing about justice and wholeness to God's creation. This ministry includes not only taking care of immediate basic needs, but also helping to alleviate the suffering caused by unjust systems. In the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "We are not to simply bandage the wounds of victims beneath the wheels of injustice, we are to drive a spoke into the wheel itself."³

Diakonia is a service ministry that focuses on bringing about justice and wholeness in the world; from the Greek – Diakonos which means service. This term is a holistic concept and practice rooted in the biblical story and the ministry of Jesus Christ. It is a transformational and prophetic ministry that aims to address root causes of pain and suffering in the world.⁴

ELCA is the acronym for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America that was incorporated in 1988 from the merger of three Lutheran bodies; The Lutheran Church in America, The American Lutheran Church and The Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches.

² Carol Schickel, "What Is a Deacon?" Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2020, <http://www.elca.org/>.

³ "Notable Quotes," The Dietrich Bonhoeffer Institute, accessed May 12, 2020, <https://tdbi.org/dietrich-bonhoeffer/notable-quotes/>.

⁴ "Theological Perspectives on Diakonia in the Twenty-First Century," *Ecumenical Review* 63, no. 3 (October 2012), <https://doi.org/https://www.doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-6623.2012.00182.x>.

LAMPa is the Lutheran advocacy ministry of Pennsylvania and is part of the greater ELCA advocacy office in Washington DC. This ministry works on behalf of peace and justice for the people of Pennsylvania, especially those who are suffering from violence, poverty, lack of healthcare and other issues that oppress.

Liturgy consists of rituals performed in a corporate worship service. The ELCA is considered a “liturgical church” which follows an order of service that includes confession and forgiveness, creeds, scripture, prayers, sermons and the sacraments. Most churches use the liturgy from our Lutheran worship hymnals. According to the ELCA, the pattern (or liturgy) of worship follows this guideline:⁵

- **Gathering:** “The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God” (ELW p. 92) The gathering does just that: it gathers us in preparation for hearing God’s word and receiving God’s presence in Holy Communion. Elements of the gathering may include song, prayer, confession/baptismal remembrance. It may be very brief or extended depending on local practice, season of the church year or other factors.
- **Word:** “God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song” (ELW p. 92) The corporate hearing of God’s word has its roots in Jewish tradition. From the earliest times, reading -- singing -- reading -- singing created a natural rhythm of proclamation and response. The rhythm provides quiet time for worshipers to listen attentively and active time to respond, reflect, and prepare for what is coming -- preaching on the proclaimed texts. In a world of short attention spans, it is a pattern worth keeping. Within the liturgy of the Word, the traditional order has been Old Testament reading, psalm, New Testament

⁵ “Frequently Asked Questions- Liturgy,” ELCA.org, 2020, <http://www.elca.org/>.

- reading, gospel acclamation, Holy Gospel, and sermon. The experience of hearing God's word is followed by a series of responses from the assembly. While many Christians share this general pattern of worship, Lutherans in particular treasure an element of this pattern called the Hymn of the Day. More than a hymn based on the sermon, this hymn or song brings together the themes expressed in the biblical texts and the season of the church year. By singing together, the assembly adds its voice to the proclamation of God's word.

The service of the word concludes (sometimes) with the reciting of the creed and most always with the prayers of the people. The exchange of peace bridges the word portion of this pattern with the meal portion.

- **Meal:** "God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ" (ELW p. 93) The pattern surrounding the meal finds its prototype in the scriptural accounts of the institution of Christ's supper: Jesus "took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it." The table setting, great thanksgiving, breaking of bread, and communion is how Christ's command to "do this in remembrance of me" is lived out today, as it has been for centuries.
- **Sending:** "God blesses us and sends us out in mission to the world" (ELW p. 93) The objective of the sending is to empower the assembly to take God's message into the world. This is typically the briefest portion of the service, often consisting of a blessing, sending, song and communion. Sending communion to the absent may also be included. Once strengthened by the meal, it is time for God's people to be sent into the mission field: "Go in peace. Serve the Lord."

Ordination is a liturgical rite of setting apart a person to the ministry of word and service or word and sacrament. Until 2019, this rite was exclusive for pastors or ministers of word and sacrament in the ELCA. In 2019, all deacons are now considered "ordained" even if they were

consecrated. This was to enable equality among the professional ministers: ministers of word and sacrament (pastors) or ministers of word and service (deacons).

Pastor is a minister of word and sacrament in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Pastors are considered caretakers of the congregation. A pastor is called to preach the word, administer the sacraments and provide pastoral care. According to the Augsburg Confession, Article XXVIII, also called “Of Ecclesiastical Power”, pastors “preach the Gospel, to remit and retain sins, and administer the Sacraments (Baptism and Holy Communion).⁶

Political diakonia is diaconal action that consciously reflects political/societal issues and seeks expression in the public sphere. It calls out unjust laws with the goal of obtaining laws that allow all people to flourish in society.⁷

Prophetic, a word from our biblical tradition means the vocation in God’s name to lift up one’s voice against injustice and in defense of the poor and oppressed.

Secular comes from the Latin “saeculum” (the present world) and used to describe what does not belong to the domain of religion.

Social Gospel Movement was a religious social reform movement prominent in the United States from about 1870 to 1920. This religious movement interpreted the kingdom of God as requiring social as well as individual salvation and sought the betterment of industrialized society through application of the biblical principles of charity and justice. The issues that were at the forefront were issues of social justice such as economic inequality, poverty, alcoholism,

⁶ “The Augsburg Confession,” The Book of Concord, accessed April 22, 2020, <http://bookofconcord.org/>, article XXVIII.

⁷ “Congregations and Synods,” Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2020, <http://www.elca.org/>.

crime, racial tensions, slums, unclean environment, child labor, lack of unionization, poor schools, and the dangers of war.

Social Statements are written by selected ELCA members and reflect the biblical story, Lutheran doctrine and our response as a church to social issues such as abortion, racism, gender issues and creation justice, just to name a few.

Synods are geographical regions of Lutheran Churches. There exist 65 synods across the United States, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Each synod has a presiding bishop, council and staff that work with their congregations. Synods help to oversee the congregations in their area.

Vocation comes from the Latin *vocare*, to call, and means the work a person is called to by God. For this paper, this term refers to the professional call that is felt by someone to serve God's people through the word (the Gospel) and through service or sacrament in the church.

Introduction

Christian discipleship includes the ministry of diakonia. I contend that most of our congregations, synodical leaders and candidacy committees do not fully comprehend this important ministry. While many of our congregations are already performing types of service ministry, there seems to be a lack of understanding of the full scope of diakonia. Diakonia is an intentional service ministry that begins in worship, liturgy and Christian education and is taken out into the world, thereby bridging church and world. Diakonia is an often-misunderstood ministry of the Lutheran church at both the national and congregational levels. Often diakonia is viewed as simply a transactional service ministry; however, there is more to this ministry. Diakonia is a holistic concept and practice rooted in the Bible and faithful to the ministry of Christ. It is transformative and prophetic which aims at not only reaching out to those persons on the margins of our society but is intentional at addressing root causes and helping to provide solutions that enable all of God's people to flourish.⁸ This paper will culminate in an educational resource for congregations, synods, candidacy committees and the ELCA to fully understand the ministry of diakonia and its application.

The ELCA has intentional diaconal vocational ministry. The rostered ministry of deacon is crucial to equipping our congregations to live out the call of diakonia. Another goal of this paper is to highlight the work of the deacon and will attempt to highlight the struggles of the rostered deacon in the ELCA as well as a way for the ELCA to utilize this important roster to its fullest potential. Diakonia is part of our Lutheran baptismal identity, and we are called to serve

⁸1Ham, Carlos Emilio. "Theological Perspectives on Diakonia in the Twenty-First Century." *Ecumenical Review* 63, no. 3 (October 2012). <https://doi.org/https://www.doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-6623.2012.00182.x>.

our neighbor individually and corporately. This rostered ministry of deacon is crucial to equipping our congregations to live out the call of diakonia.

Until 2018, there were three forms of vocational diaconal ministry in the ELCA: the Deaconess, the Diaconal Minister and the Associate in Ministry. These three vocational expressions encompassed different educational expectations and different entrance rites which helped to create the confusion amongst the church. However, in 2018 the Churchwide assembly of the ELCA created one roster of “Deacon” and subsequently, the rite of Ordination. These advancements are a great start in working towards an understanding of the roster of deacon, but more education is needed for the church to understand the role a deacon can play in equipping others to participate in diakonia. Education is also needed for congregations, synods and the greater church to fully understand and embrace this ministry. Education needs to be implemented using biblical study, confessional documents, the use of liturgy, diaconal history and how diakonia is a crucial part of an individual and corporate life as a disciple.

Diakonia is also an important topic for discussion when it comes to working with our ecumenical partners. Many of our denominations have different understandings of the role of the deacon as well as the role of diakonia, or intentional servant ministry in the church. In 1983, The World Council of Churches created a document entitled “Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry”, that discusses the threefold office of the Bishop, Presbyter and Deacon.⁹ This paper states “By struggling in Christ’s name with the myriad needs of societies and persons, deacons exemplify the interdependence of worship and service in the Church’s life.” While an advancement has been made since this report was published in 1983, the consolidation of the three previous diaconal rosters, the Associate in Ministry, the Diaconal Minister and the Deaconess, into the

⁹ In Baptism Eucharist and Ministry, vol. 111 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, n.d.), pp. 1-39, 24.

roster of deacon, changes have not trickled down to some synods and congregations. The role of the new roster of deacon has not been fully integrated into the life of the church.

The church is already replicating some work of the secular social service agencies which begs the question, “What makes the church’s servant ministries different?” I contend that diakonia brings a lens of Christian discipleship that shapes the way leaders and congregations bridge the church and the world, in other words, engaging in diakonia. Diakonia does not stop at providing basic needs but includes a prophetic voice that calls out injustice and works to end the root causes of pain and suffering in the world, which includes action on our part.

If we view theology as the study of the nature of God in our world, then diakonia is an important component of our understanding of the relationship of God and God’s created order. There are many scriptures found in both the Old and New testaments that reveal how God’s people throughout the ages viewed God and God’s interactions with the Israelites, the Hebrews, the Jews and the early Christians. Both testaments include stories of a just God and how God sides on behalf of the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized.

Chapter 1: Biblical and Theological Foundations

For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Deuteronomy 10:17-19

Our Scriptures are packed with stories that indicate that we are to serve our neighbor; that justice is paramount to our faith. Love of one's neighbor is a central theme in our Judeo-Christian scriptures. Diakonia is a component of neighbor love. There are many scriptures, from both old and new testament that point to diakonia. Neighbor love is part of our Judeo-Christian heritage:

..learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow. – Isaiah 1:17

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? – Micah 6:8

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another. -John 13:34-35

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me'. – Matthew 25:35-40

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. – Luke 4:18-19

These biblical mandates point to diakonia as love of neighbor through service, seeing each person we meet as Jesus, working for justice and ending oppression. The teachings in

scriptures are clear about the importance of taking care of people in need, particularly the orphans, widows and strangers. While our context has changed, there still exist persons who are orphaned from lack of adequate housing, war and poverty. Widows were seen as those who had no adequate resources in which to survive, and can be compared to those in our own midst who do not have adequate income to cover their basic needs, those persons without adequate health care or insurance. The stranger today can be equated with immigrants who are crossing our southern border in order to escape gang violence, poverty and instability.

Jesus often used parables and other teachings to help his followers to understand the importance of neighbor love, which included service. The biblical notion of diakonia articulates the mandate of service and love of neighbor. Jesus was the ultimate example of carrying out diakonia as he was seen meeting, serving and healing those considered on the margins of society; lepers, tax collectors, prostitutes, those afflicted with demons, women and gentiles. He put his love into action as he cared for all people. As disciples of Christ, we too are called to emulate his actions towards those in need.

Deacons in the Early Church

The role of the diaconate began in the time of the New Testament and the early church and has continued throughout Christian history. In the New Testament, diakonia is used to describe Jesus' own way of service in Matthew 20:28, Mark 10:45; and Luke 22:27: "The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve".¹⁰ The Good News (of Jesus Christ) compels Christian diakonia.¹¹ If we ask for whom this ministry is carried out, the answer is the triune God. If we ask for what it ministers, the answer must be supremely the word of God (Acts 6:2, 4; Col. 1:23, 25, etc.) If we ask to whom we carry out diakonia, the answer is manifold. It is not really to God, but to our neighbor (Romans 12-13), all the outcasts and those on the margins in whom opportunity confronts us (Matthew 25). It comes in congregations (1 Peter 4:9) and outside the church walls. Wherever the need exists the opportunity for diakonia looms.¹²

The book of Acts, chapter 6, gives us an understanding of the first commissioning of 7 men who were given the task to look at the needs of the marginalized groups in the church. Widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. These first seven men also made sure that everyone had access to *koinonia* or fellowship of the whole community. It would seem that these men made sure that all had what they needed in the community and rank and power did not provide special privileges. One could say that the modern diaconate grew out of this biblical concept of justice, fairness and *koinonia*.

Ordination ceremonies for women are known from the early third century.¹³ There is evidence that both men and women were ordained to the ministry of deacon from the third to the

¹⁰ Olson, Jeannine Evelyn. *Deacons and Deaconesses through the Centuries*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Pub. House, 2005, 21.

¹¹ Reumann, *Diakonia: Scriptural Foundations*, 2.

¹² Reumann, 22.

¹³ Phyllis Zagano, "Remembering Tradition: Women's Monastic Rituals and the Diaconate," *Theological Studies* 72 (2011): pp. 787-801, 787.

sixth century in the Eastern Church¹⁴ Both men and women were presented with stoles and self-communed from the eucharistic chalice. Female deacons assisted with liturgy and ministered to the women of the church and prepared female catechumens for baptism. Many of the female deacons were either widows or virgins and took up a life of celibacy. The widows were appointed to a life of prayer and social services.

The early church deacons were called to care for the community of faith. They carried ministry which bore witness to what God has done in Jesus Christ: liberating the oppressed, opening the eyes that are blind, healing the sick and offering fullness of life for all creation.¹⁵

Lutheran Confessions

While the term “diakonia” is not found in our Lutheran confessional documents, we can find instances where Luther and the reformers talk about good works. Article VI of the Augsburg Confession on New Obedience: “Also they teach that this faith is bound to bring forth good fruits, and that it is necessary to do good works commanded by God, because of God's will, but that we should not rely on those works to merit justification.”¹⁶ Article XX states, “Furthermore, it is taught on our part that it is necessary to do good works, not that we should trust to merit grace by them, but because it is the will of God.”¹⁷

Luther exhorted all Christians to “govern yourself according to love and tolerate no injustice toward your neighbor. The gospel does not forbid this; in fact, it actually commands it”. For Luther, love of neighbor is part of the believers’ proper response to justification¹⁸

¹⁴ Phyllis Zagano, “Remembering Tradition: Women's Monastic Rituals and the Diaconate,” 799.

¹⁵ Phiri, Isabel Apawo, and Kim Dongsung. “Called to Be a Diaconal Community”, 255.

¹⁶ “The Augsburg Confession.” The Book of Concord. Accessed April 22, 2020. <http://bookofconcord.org/>.

¹⁷ The Augsburg Confession

¹⁸ The Anglican–Lutheran International Commission (ALIC III), ed. To Love and Serve the Lord: Diakonia in the Life of the Church ; the Jerusalem Report of the Anglican-Lutheran International Commission (ALIC III). Geneva, Switzerland: Lutheran World Federation, 2012, 25.

Luther's Small and Large Catechisms include arguments that the Gospel saves which leads the individual to specific behaviors and practices. In the Large Catechism, Luther addresses the role and its service towards the people it governs:

The Fourth Commandment: Civil government is an extension of the responsibility and authority of the parental role and is to serve society, so that all people have their basic needs met and can live full and productive lives.¹⁹

The First Article of the Apostle's Creed: Good government is a gift of God and a blessing alongside necessities such as body, soul, life, nourishment, air, water, peace and security.²⁰

The Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer: Daily bread includes all we need for our daily life, and the role of rulers is to ensure daily bread for all.²¹

Luther stressed the essential role of government as a means by which God cares for the most vulnerable. In Luther's commentary on Psalm 82, Luther addressed the princes who further the Word of God by ensuring "justice for those who fear God", including establishing laws to prevent the oppression of "the poor, the wretched, widows and orphans". The government, he said, is a "divine hospital" that cares for the poor, widows and orphans and ensures that no one will become a beggar.²²

Luther's understanding of God's grace frees us from sin and gives us the opportunity to serve our neighbor and work on behalf of justice and peace. The church is to show up, speak out and when necessary protest laws and actions of government as a visible expression of neighbor love. Luther's writings during the 16th century spoke out against the treatment of those who were considered on the margins of society; those who were deemed unworthy by government and the

¹⁹ The Large Catechism, Book of Concord, 407.

²⁰ The Apostle's Creed, Book of Concord, 432-33.

²¹ The Lord's Prayer, Book of Concord, 450.

²² Ryan P. Cumming, *The Forgotten Luther II: Reclaiming the Church's Public Witness* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2019), 91.

church of being uneducated, not worthy of being heard and were seen as sources of revenue from the upper classes.²³

These writings and the Lutheran confessions lay the groundwork for the contemporary church to work on behalf of justice and peace, speak out against oppression, and to work to change laws that hurt all of God's people.

²³ Ryan P. Cumming, *The Forgotten Luther II*, 53.

Chapter 2: Understanding Diakonia

“The church is the real thing when it is not consumed with the assertion of power in culture, but it is driven by service to others. The word ministry translates the Greek word diakonia, which means service. The church must be about serving others. When a church can lay claim to all three criteria, namely, preaching of the Word, being true to its confession, and focusing on serving, then it’s a church worth going to. And then it’s a church full of sermons worth listening to.”

— Stephen J. Nichols, *Bonhoeffer on the Christian Life: From the Cross, for the World*

Diakonia is both a general term for the ministry of all Christians and the name for a specialized office and function in the church.²⁴ Diakonia comes from the Greek word, *diakonos*, which means “service”. Ancient Greeks also used this word to mean “serve at the table”.²⁵ This word had an evolution from being seen as a demeaning activity as understood by the ancient Greeks to a mandate given to followers of Jesus Christ as written in the Bible. The Christian movement took a Greek term with somewhat menial connotations and, true to the words and examples of Jesus, made it an emblem of all-loving service to others.²⁶

Diakonia is often regarded as acts of charity and benevolence that have been conferred upon the less fortunate of the needy in one’s community. When the World Council of Churches was founded in 1948, this form of diakonia was focused on bringing services to prisoners and refugees of World War II.

This holistic concept is a practice that takes its expression by administering acts of compassion, caring for creation and working on behalf of justice.²⁷ This is part of our individual faith journeys as well as a corporate mandate for our congregations. Many persons and

²⁴ Reumann, John. *Diakonia: Scriptural Foundations*. Philadelphia, n.d., 12.

²⁵ Gutierrez, Fernando. “Diakonia: Everyone Is First a Worshipper.” *The Priest*, November 2013, 50.

²⁶ Reumann, *Diakonia: Scriptural Foundations*, 13.

²⁷ Ham, Carlos Emilio. “Theological Perspectives on Diakonia in the Twenty-First Century.” *Ecumenical Review* 63, no. 3 (October 2012), 220.

congregations are already participating in diaconal ministry. Food and clothing banks, drives for school supplies, Christmas presents and other items for needy people can be the staples of outreach ministries for our parishioners and congregations. While this is an important component of diaconal ministry, we are called to do much more than charitable gestures. Churches and individuals can view diakonia as a Christian response to people in need and situations of crisis and is characterized by actions of reaching out to them from locations of power and privilege with our resources.²⁸ It becomes a transactional situation that becomes a “band aid” instead of changing the structures that created their need for resources. Diakonia involves not only providing resources, but confronting powers and structures that cause people to stay marginalized. Authentic diakonia is challenging the injustices and abuse of powers that continue to exploit God’s people and prevent them from obtaining their basic needs.

The ministry of diakonia is also the activity of restoring human dignity to all of God’s people. To deny protection and respect for human dignity and rights to any person amounts to discrimination and exclusion from the full membership of the human family.²⁹ As Christians, we are all mandated to perform the ministry of diakonia. Diakonia is...

1. the common denominator among various forms of ministries, which includes service ministries. Diakonia with other forms of ministries promotes unity; it divides if used to serve personal, economic and false ideologies.³⁰
2. service done in God’s name.
3. response to the saving power of the cross by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
4. bearing the suffering and infirmities of the poor and those on the margins of society.

²⁸ Emilio, *Theological Perspectives on Diakonia in the Twenty-First Century*, 222.

²⁹ Parhiala, Paulina, and Gorden Simango. “Diakonia and Human Dignity.” *The Ecumenical Review* 66, no. 3 (2014): 330.

³⁰ Gutierrez, Fernando. “Diakonia: Everyone Is First a Worshipper.” *The Priest*, November 2013, 55.

5. performed out of love for God and neighbor.
6. a transformational ministry that enables all of God's people to flourish.

Norma Cook Everest, Professor emerita of Church and Ministry at Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa says, "Faithful diakonia is theologically grounded in a theology of the cross, otherwise it would deny the deep needs of people and the great wounds of the world. Diaconal ministry is definitely ministry in the world, but it is never ministry outside the body of Christ. Diakonia is not just an add-on to the work of the church".³¹

A Survey of Deacons

In order to collect data on what other deacons in the ELCA are experiencing and how they view diakonia, I did an online survey of over 50 deacons. The respondents ranged from seminary students to deacons who are currently retired. Interestingly the deacons/deaconesses I surveyed had a variety of understandings about diakonia. Most understood diakonia as a service ministry, bridging the church and the world. One deacon explained diakonia in this way, "I see it as a ministry of education for people who want to serve in the Church, but for various reasons are not pursuing an academic degree." This answer came from a retired deacon who served the church for 40 years. She had a Master of Divinity degree from seminary and was rostered as an Associate in Ministry, one of the three diaconal expressions that the ELCA recognized until the unification of the roster in 2016. This was an "outlier" that may be attributed to the lack of education of diakonia in her formation. An answer from a deacon/deaconess who has only served as a rostered leader for 9 years has this understanding of diakonia, "Grounded in the baptismal call and fueled by the sacraments, the ministry of diakonia is the ministry of

³¹ Everest, Norma Cook. "Diaconal Ministry from the Open Tomb to the Open World." *Currents in Theology and Mission* 42, no. 3 (July 2015), 178.

activating the body of Christ for the sake of the world, and caring for the needs of the world with the gifts of the body of Christ.”

Individual and corporate formation in diakonia is paramount in helping the deacon to truly understand the ministry of diakonia. The problem we are facing right now is the bridging of three different professional diaconal expressions, the Associate in Ministry, the Diaconal Minister and the Deaconess into one roster of Deacon. Many Associates in Ministry were “grandfathered” into this roster after serving as youth and Christian Ed directors, parish secretaries and administrators and musicians. While many may have taken lay courses in seminary, a masters degree was not required.

According to Sister Krista Anderson, Program Director for Support of the Word and Service (Deacon) Roster in the ELCA, the majority of the new deacon roster consists of men and women who have previously been Associates in Ministry (AIM). Previous Associates in Ministry account for almost 70 percent of the current Deacon Roster. Former Diaconal Ministers make up around 20 percent with the remaining deacons belonging to the Deaconess Community of the ELCA. Because we have so many deacons from the previous roster of AIM, many have had little or no diaconal education and formation.

Anderson cited that while there are several seminaries that have intentional diaconal formation events and classes for seminary students, there still lacks continuing education for deacons that have not had previous education. The Deaconess Community of the ELCA offers a J-term course for seminary students and deacons that covers the history of diakonia and spiritual formation. This is one of the few classes that is offered and usually has a small cap on the amount of students that can attend. It is evident that more formation needs to be provided for all

deacons, especially for deacons who have not had the opportunity for diaconal formation in the past.

Ecumenical Diakonia

Reflecting on the diversity of different cultural experiences of the diaconate has the ability to think about the relationships between ministries between different denominations and cultures. While churches may have disagreements on various theological understandings of sacraments and other religious areas, different denominations can work together to address problems of poverty and social injustice. As they proclaim Christ in deeds of love and service, these churches find themselves in a deepening relationship.³²

Our differing contexts can be a blessing as it pertains to ecumenical diakonia. In its local setting, poverty has distinct expressions and specific root causes. Weak governance, corruption, ethnic conflict and civil war are some of the factors that add suffering upon suffering for people living in poverty. At the same time, these also are factors that urge churches to renew their diaconal commitment and find new ways of caring for, and working with the poor and oppressed, lifting up their dignity and defending their rights.³³ Working together ecumenically provides more resources in which to work on behalf of God's children. If a specific denomination is already doing work in a certain area, it would be more effective to partner with that church body than trying to work independently to arrive at the same results. These partnerships will help strengthen the relationships between the church bodies as well as benefit the people which will benefit from that relationship. Involvement in ecumenical diakonia is one leg of a three-legged stool; the individual, the congregation and ecumenical diakonia.

³² The Anglican–Lutheran International Commission, 25.

³³ Nordstokke, Kjell, ed. *Diakonia in Context | Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment*. Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 2009, 17.

One of the organizations that promoted ecumenical diakonia, is the Lutheran World Federation that was established in 1947. The Lutheran World Federation was a communion of churches which led to the founding of the first Deaconess Motherhouse by Theodor and Friederike Fliedner in Kaiserswerth on the Rhine in Germany in 1836. This Lutheran group grew to include diaconal groups from different denominations. The Diakonia World Federation focuses on diakonia as it:³⁴

- reflects on the nature and task of diakonia in the biblical context
- links and gathers those who are engaged in diaconal work worldwide across denominations and cultures
- encourages, supports and empowers the development of groups doing diaconal work
- lives what it preaches as it pertains to diakonia; diakonia as a way of life

Ecumenical diakonia through the *Diakonia World Federation* can provide greater impact for professional diaconal ministers in their calls. While working in different denominations and in different locations, the benefits include a sense of community even when members are separated by great distances. Most communities plan conferences, meetings and retreats and keep in touch through networks, newsletters and regional gatherings. Diaconal members work collegially in teams and make decisions by consensus whenever possible. They share common goals, a call to ministry and an identity. They often act as advocates and pastoral support for one another.³⁵

Ecumenical Partnerships

“Imagine the future! Being in relationship globally and ecumenically is central to diakonia today.”³⁶ Diakonia is relational, not just within a particular denomination, but in the wider ecumenical community that practices diaconal ministries. According to the World

³⁴ Deaconess Diane Kaufmann, “DIAKONIA World Federation,” DIAKONIA World Federation, accessed September 14, 2020, <http://www.diakonia-world.org/>.

³⁵ Diakonia World Federation

³⁶ Norma Cook Everest, “Diaconal Ministry from the Open Tomb to the Open World,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 42, no. 3 (July 2015): pp. 177-183, 180.

Federation of Diakonia, “The World Federation of DIAKONIA is a link to bring understanding and acceptance. It is a place to learn to listen without prejudice. It is a place to develop a spirituality of receiving and giving without colonialistic ideas. It encompasses and brings together the diversity of languages and cultures represented by its members around the world. It reveals one common identity as servants of Christ, our common goal of being God's presence in the world. Through this unity we support each other in a broader vision of the world's needs; we become partners and friends building new bridges. DIAKONIA brings into focus the world history of diaconal ministry which is our shared history. It will facilitate networking, sharing and support. It will be a source of encouragement and learning for new deacons. It will join its voice in the struggle against economic domination and the power of bureaucracy. It will use power to empower others.”³⁷

Diakonia World Federation has over 35 participating countries that are members of this ecumenical partnership. There are many denominations represented from Lutheran to Methodist, Episcopal and Roman Catholic. Individual church structures and theologies may be different, but the common thread is the ministry of diakonia.

The World Council of Churches often has ecumenical group conversations on diakonia. One of these conversations was under the title “Compelled to Serve: Diakonia and Development in a Rapidly Changing World.” Its main focus was international diakonia, taking into consideration current global trends, many of which also challenge diaconal work at the local level, such as migration, climate change, and shrinking political space. One of the conversation groups concluded,

The participants affirm that churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC must continue to network and form alliances across denominations in order to work together and add value

³⁷ Kaufmann, Deaconess Diane. “Diaconal Reflections How We Experience Our Diaconal Calling in Our Diversity.” DIAKONIA World Federation, 1998. <http://www.diakonia-world.org/index.shtml>.

to our diaconal work in a rapidly changing development context... The participants affirm that churches, ecumenical partners and the WCC must respond to the signs of time by developing a common diaconal language. We are faith based and rights based and we need to identify what this means in practice including defining both our mandate, our core values and map our diaconal assets.³⁸

One of the dangers of ecumenical diakonia can be the injection of one's denominational theology as well as an "American" understanding of culture. Leslie Boseto is a bishop of the United Church of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands and a past president of the World Council of Churches. She writes, "Unfortunately, one destructive thing done by those who introduced different denominations and Western civilization to our islands was to assimilate our tribal entities into their doctrines, cultures and systems. This means that our human base has been fragmented and weakened. Those of us who are leaders of our churches and governments become servants of the oppressive institutions and systems that are serving ourselves, but are not serving the least advantaged neighbours of our nations."³⁹ As deacons, when we work with other cultures and countries, it is imperative that we allow the local church or diaconal group to take the lead when it comes to working on behalf of justice and peace in their context. Transformative diakonia takes place differently in different cultures. We need to reach out to those who are on the margins, those who are oppressed to understand their needs and how we can help.

I am reminded of a global mission ministry in our church who has a relationship with the Busoka Lutheran Church in Tanzania, part of the Konde Diocese in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Africa. They are a very poor, rural church whose members were known for taking care of orphans. Many children were orphaned due to the AIDS crisis. Our church group, known as the Tanzanian Mission Committee, decided to send them a tiller as an aid to grow crops. What the group didn't consider was the fact that once the tiller malfunctioned, there was no way to fix

³⁸ Kjell Nordstokke, "Ecumenical Diakonia: Responding to the Sign of the Times," *The Ecumenical Review* 66, no. 3 (October 2014): pp. 265-273, 272.

³⁹ "Ecumenical Diakonia," *The Ecumenical Review* 46, no. 3 (July 1994): pp. 301-310, 303.

it or obtain parts. This is an example of allowing those we serve to help direct the ways we serve and transformation can only take place when we help to empower the oppressed to have a voice in what they need and to be part of the solution.

I am a member of the Poor People's Campaign, an ecumenical group of faith leaders who work with the poor and marginalized in our country. I was introduced to this organization through the Deaconess Community of the ELCA and the community voted to be a faith partner with this group. I work with the Poor People's Campaign on their national level as a member of the community and on the local level as a deacon who lives and wants to make changes in Pennsylvania. I believe this organization dovetails perfectly with the ministry of diakonia since it equips those on the margins to have a voice and as a deacon I am called to equip others.

This organization, which was the brainchild of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is a great example of ecumenical diakonia at work. One of their fundamental principle's states, "We are committed to lifting up and deepening the leadership of those most affected by systemic racism, poverty, the war economy, and ecological devastation and to building unity across lines of division."⁴⁰ One of the main goals of this group is to help transform people's lives so all can flourish. As faith leaders, we give them the voice and the power to be part of the solution and change. As a white female deacon who lives in a nice house and can live comfortably on my and my husband's salary, I cannot fully understand what it is like to be one paycheck away from losing my home. I do not know what it is like to wonder where my next meal is coming from or where I am going to sleep tonight. While I can help advocate for policies that can break the cycle of poverty, I cannot be the lone voice of the oppressed. It is a partnership and while I already

⁴⁰ "Poor People's Campaign: Our Principles," Poor People's Campaign, accessed October 1, 2020, <https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/>.

have a voice, I need to step back from my platform and provide it to those who are marginalized and have never had a voice in our society.

The faith leaders in the Poor People's Campaign come from all denominations and spiritual practices. We are made up of mainline denominational leaders, Jewish rabbis, Buddhist monks, and Unitarian Universalists. We work together to bring about change and transformation in our society, not trying to force our individual theological persuasions on each other or those we serve.

Chapter 3 - History of the Diaconate in North America

"I have nothing now, but because I need it, I believe something will come" -- that's putting into action what Jesus says in Sunday's Gospel: "If God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you -- you of little faith."

Sister Elizabeth Fedde, Lutheran Deaconess (1850-1921)

From Europe to America and the Deaconess Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries

For Luther, love of neighbor is part of the believers' proper response to justification. The Lutheran Reformation, not only in the German lands but also in Scandinavia, was generally accompanied by reform of care for the poor and the sick, leading to the establishment of poor chests in parishes in the wake of the closure of the monasteries and convents that had provided much of this care.⁴¹

In the Lutheran tradition there were instances where pastors were still first ordained as deacons. Serving in the diaconate was seen as a stepping stone towards ordination as a pastor. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries this practice was eliminated. The Augsburg Confession (Articles V and XIV) sees the ordained ministry exclusively as a ministry of Word and sacrament. Care of the poor was seen as being the responsibility of all believers, who were called to be neighbors to one another and take responsibility for one another. Taking care of the poor and needy was relegated to local authorities.⁴²

The nineteenth century saw the revival of the diaconate. Europe is credited with the creation of many of our modern diaconal groups found in the United States. As colonialism

⁴¹ The Anglican–Lutheran International Commission (ALIC III), ed., *To Love and Serve the Lord: Diakonia in the Life of the Church ; the Jerusalem Report of the Anglican-Lutheran International Commission (ALIC III)* (Geneva, Switzerland: Lutheran World Federation, 2012), 23.

⁴² *To Love and Serve the Lord: Diakonia in the Life of the Church*, 24.

brought Europeans to the Americas, the Diaconate also found new ground.⁴³ One cannot discount the importance of the history of the diaconate as deaconesses traveled from Germany and Scandinavia to North America in the mid-19th century. The United States was only 100 years old as a country, and it was evident as more cities evolved and with the arrival of industrialization, that there was a need for diaconal ministry.

Deaconesses from Kaiserswerth Germany were brought to the United States by William Alfred Passavant, who graduated from the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg, Pa in 1842. Passavant became acquainted with the German deaconess movement in 1847 when he visited Theodore Fliedner in Kaiserswerth and was determined to establish the diaconate in the form of Lutheran deaconesses in the United States. The deaconesses were able to focus on the immediate needs of their ethnic group. The German (American) deaconesses hailed from poor, rural families with little or no education, and many did not speak or read English. Deaconesses from these immigrant communities felt compelled to minister to their own people.

The North American Industrial Revolution created a great deal of change in society. One major change was the shift from work being done at home by hand in cottage industries to work being done in factories. There were harsh and unsafe working conditions in these early factories. The machines posed a significant threat to workers' lives. An average worker would work 14 hours a day, six days a week. Fearful of losing their jobs, workers would typically not complain about the horrible conditions and low pay. Owners realized that they could pay women and children less than men. Child labor increased because it kept the costs of production low and the

⁴³ Melissa James, "Institutionalizing Engagement: Examining the History of the Diaconate in North America," *Journal of the Lutheran Historical Conference*, 2014, pp. 50-68, 51.

profits high. As a result, the working-class lived-in poverty, while the bosses who made up the middle class grew wealthy.⁴⁴

With hope for a brighter future, nearly 12 million immigrants arrived in the United States between 1840 and 1900. From 1840 thru 1860, the vast majority of these people were from Germany, Ireland, and England--the principal sources of immigration before the Civil War.⁴⁵ After the civil war, immigrants arrived from Italy, Scandinavia, and Russias; there were also Jews, Poles and more Irish immigrants. Female deacons, from Europe, known as Deaconesses were already serving within their own ethnic communities.

Deaconesses were guided by William Alfred Passavant who founded many missions and hospitals, as well as homes for epileptics, orphanages and homes for the aged. Many of the social welfare agencies that he founded would later join together as the Lutheran Services in America, the largest church social agency in America⁴⁶. The Deaconesses worked in Passavant's hospitals as nurses, in private nursing, as teachers and parish workers. Under the direction of William Passavant, they helped to establish orphanages and schools and provided spiritual care, especially to other women.⁴⁷

The Social Gospel Movement in the United States influenced the work of the deaconess. This movement in the United States began as a faith-based, grassroots movement of laity and clergy in the aftermath of the Civil War. This era of American society faced extreme levels of social instability resulting not only from wartime trauma and loss, but also relocation of massive

⁴⁴ "Social Effects of the Industrial Revolution (1800-1920)." FCPS World II SOL Standards: 2014.

⁴⁵ 18 "Immigration to the United States, 1851-1900." Library of Congress. Accessed August 10, 2020. <https://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/timeline/riseind/immigrants/#:~:text=In%20the%20late%201800s%2C%20people,the%20land%20of%20economic%20opportunity>.

⁴⁶ "William Passavant, Prophetic Witness 1894," A Great Cloud of Witnesses, November 3, 2018, http://satucket.com/lectionary/william_passavant.htm.

⁴⁷ Olson, 269

numbers of those emancipated from slavery, a rapidly accelerated pace of both industrialization and urbanization and unprecedented waves of immigration⁴⁸. The goal of the Social Gospel was to bring about Christian salvation that redeemed and transformed both personal lives and the social order. This spiritual conversion was aimed not only at individuals, but also at the nation and the world. Social gospel workers applied themselves to both domestic and foreign social betterment opportunities while the movement's leaders maximized the persuasive power of pulpit, platform and press.⁴⁹

The Social Gospel movement propelled deaconesses in the late 19th and early twentieth centuries to defend a just wage for women and the poor as well as offering ideas for remedying poverty and economic injustice.⁵⁰ While Lutheran deaconesses did not believe that personal salvation was tied to the Social Gospel, it was a relevant movement that aimed to change unjust living conditions for all people, which would help change society as a whole. This movement engaged in looking at systemic issues beyond individual sin. This movement also recognized that most people did not have the political power or choice to change their circumstances.

Deaconesses were at the forefront of calling out injustice and speaking truth to power when confronted with the suffering of individuals. They exhibited courage when they traveled from their homes in Europe to minister to their own ethnic communities, even as they themselves were lacking the education of learning a new language and came with very little belongings. They answered the call of God and took a risk for the sake of the Gospel. The Deaconesses began as a role that interacted with and served communities otherwise neglected. From the beginning, the

⁴⁸ Deichmann, Wendy J. "The Social Gospel as a Grassroots Movement." *Church History* 84, no. 1 (March 2015): 203.

⁴⁹ Deichmann, pg. 203.

⁵⁰ Olson, 24.

Diaconate served to both take up the established, legitimized gendered roles as well as challenge the symbolic universes operative in church and society.⁵¹

Diakonia as a Marginalized Profession

The first part of the twentieth century was a continuation of the nineteenth century as far as the diaconate, or the ministry of diakonia, was concerned.⁵² Education was always a crucial component of the deacon or deaconess's life and professional understanding. Education in the early days of the American diaconate took place in the "motherhouse" where women lived and worked together. These women would also receive training in nursing, parish work or social work. Religious education as well as Lutheran confessional education was also received. Deaconesses sought to perform whatever function they deemed necessary to the exercise of their office-pastoral work, public prayer, even preaching.⁵³

Pastors often often heard crediting the deaconess for excelling at pastoral visitation. When deaconesses sought to practice preaching, liturgical or sacramental duties, they were more likely to encounter resistance from their pastors.⁵⁴ A Lutheran brochure's invitation to serve in the diaconate stated, "The field for the female diaconate is as broad as sanctified human sympathy. Nothing to counteract sin and suffering is outside the sphere of the Deaconess, except public preaching".⁵⁵

The role of the Deaconess seemed to be viewed as an extension of women's traditional roles of caregiving instead of a profession. In the early to mid 20th centuries, women's

⁵¹ Melissa James, "Institutionalizing Engagement: Examining the History of the Diaconate in North America," 54.

⁵² Olson, 295.

⁵³ Jennifer Anne Wiley Legath, *Sanctified Sisters: a History of Protestant Deaconesses* (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2019), 151.

⁵⁴ Jennifer Anne Wiley Legath, *Sanctified Sisters: a History of Protestant*, 151.

⁵⁵ Legath, 153.

involvement in church was mainly organizing the social functions, providing educational services, and supporting the work of missions. As the church became more institutionalized, the female professional diaconate was almost dissolved. In the mid 1990's, the church placed a "freeze" on the roster of the Deaconess, which meant new candidates could not be accepted into the roster. The roster of the Associate in Ministry was a roster that was created in 1988 upon the merger of the ELCA from The American Lutheran Church, the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches and the Lutheran Church in America. This roster was not a true diaconal roster focused on social ministry since Associates in Ministry were church secretaries, musicians and Christian educators. The focus was on congregational life more than bridging the church to the outside world and social outreach. In 1992, the ELCA created the roster of the Diaconal Minister which, along with the Associate in Ministry, merged into the new roster of Deacon in 2016.

Women make up the bulk of the word and service roster. The Deaconess Community is an intentional community of women and the rosters of Associate in Ministry and Diaconal Minister were made up mainly of women as well. Most men were attracted to the role of pastor. The church puts a greater importance on the role of the pastor which contributes to the deacon feeling marginalized in the church. Pay inequity is another factor that may drive men to serve as pastors rather than deacons. I would contend that many of our older congregants still see women as Sunday school teachers and coordinators of potluck suppers.

Deacons and deaconesses have many times been seen as "less than" a pastor. Upon my graduation from seminary and my consecration as a deaconess in 2011, many in my own congregation have asked me why I "didn't go all the way"; in other words, why didn't I become a pastor. I explained that my call was to word and service (deacon) and not to word and

sacrament (pastor). Many continued to press me with this issue, especially when they found out I graduated with a Master of Divinity degree, the same theological degree as pastors. Many in the ELCA Deaconess Community in which I am part, also have the same experiences that I encounter.

There are sisters in the Deaconess Community who are serving as pastors in rural congregations because the congregation cannot “afford” to pay a pastor. This crossing over of theological boundaries between Pastors, or Ministers of Word and Sacrament, and Deacons, Ministers of Word and Service, can lead to confusion between the roles. While many deacons take these calls in order to have a call and financially support themselves, I believe this says more about the congregation and their financial resources. If deacons are used as “pseudo pastors”, this will continue to lead to confusion between the roles of these two rosters.

Another area that is a justice concern is financial compensation and calls. While synods are starting to recommend the same starting salaries for both rosters (deacons and pastors), there is still work to do on this front. Deacons and deaconesses still have to “find their own calls”, unlike the pastors in which synod bishops help facilitate placement for calls. This paradigm helps to facilitate the feeling of marginalization of the deacon and deaconess.

After interviewing Sr. Krista Anderson, there seem to be more diaconal openings than deacons, especially in the midwest. She stated that the problem comes with mobility, that most deacons do not want to move to accept calls. This may be due to the fact that the majority of deacons are women and may have families that are unable or unwilling to move. If the compensation stays on the lower side, there may be a lack of incentive to move to another area. Recently, new pastors and deacons are assigned to their home synods to help facilitate calls. This may not be helpful in the event a particular synod has no open calls.

Another area of marginalization is the term “laity”. Until recently, deacons in the ELCA were considered “lay people” which also leads to a type of marginalization. Lay persons pertain to congregational members. Deacons were not seen as clergy, even though they had seminary degrees and were consecrated and called by a congregation or agency. The term “lay person” put a deacon/deaconess in the same category when it came to voting at synod assemblies and national assemblies as members of a congregation. This led to a voting assembly that could lack the representation of the deacon. Fortunately, the ordination of deacons in 2019 began to pave the way for the deacon/deaconess to be seen as equal partners to pastors.

I contend that our denomination is still very “pastor-centric”, but I believe that this is slowly starting to change. Many of the deacons and deaconesses that I surveyed felt that their call was seen as lesser than a pastor’s. I received 50 responses to a survey for deacons to help me understand their perspectives of how they perceive the view of the greater church. These are some of the survey responses that I received from deacons and deaconesses when asked how they believed the ELCA viewed the role of the deacon:

“Sadly ...having come from the former Diaconal ministry roster, I feel less than appreciated and never given a seat at ‘The Adult Table’ somewhere less than 2nd class”

“Still misunderstood by many. Some pastors seem to be threatened by us and seem to think we want their jobs. It is getting better. I believe educating folks about who we are and what we do is part of my call.”

“Second class pastor”

“Most are not sure what we are and what to do with us”

“Pretty much unknown, second to pastor, helper”

“Less than a pastor, often a stepping stone. This makes me very sad and I am passionate about doing more to elevate the role of deacon.”

“It appears that the ELCA doesn't know, ‘what to do with deacons’ because we are all over the board and serve in different areas. When deacons are not allowed to lay hands on the ordained word and sacrament pastor at ordination it is perceived that there is a hierarchy. That message is sent to ordained pastors, deacons and people in the congregation.”

As an "associate" or "inferior" role. Only for churches/organizations that can afford to "specialize."

The remaining results from this question mirrored the results that appear in this paper. It is evident that mostly all of the deacons who responded felt unappreciated, misunderstood and believed they were seen as inferior to the pastor.

While the ELCA has made advances, there is still much education that needs to be done on the congregational, synodical and national church. Pay equity needs attention in individual synods. While some synods have the same rubrics for compensation for both ministers of word and sacrament and ministers of word and service, others do not. Not to mention the fact that pastors receive a “housing allowance” that allows them to have some of their compensation untaxed. According to the Internal Revenue Service, a minister's housing allowance (sometimes called a parsonage allowance or a rental allowance) is excludable from gross income for income tax purposes.⁵⁶ The IRS website further states, “A licensed, commissioned, or ordained minister who performs ministerial services as an employee may be able to exclude from gross income the

⁵⁶ “Ministers' Compensation & Housing Allowance.” Internal Revenue Service, January 3, 2020. <https://www.irs.gov/faqs/interest-dividends-other-types-of-income/ministers-compensation-housing-allowance/ministers-compensation-housing-allowance>.

fair rental value of a home provided as part of compensation (a parsonage) or a housing allowance provided as compensation if it is used to rent or otherwise provide a home.”⁵⁷

Nowhere does this government agency state that a minister is one who is ordained to word and sacrament. Congregations should be made aware that deacons can also benefit from this provision, especially if the congregations have limited resources in which to call a deacon.

Deacons still have issues finding calls. The assignment process that happens in the fall and spring is geared more for pastors or ministers of word and sacrament.. The assignment process is for congregational vacancies. According to Bishop James Dunlop of the Lower Susquehanna Synod, “A congregation can lift up an opening for a deacon and then the normal assignment process would be used; but I have never seen one. All deacons are now assigned to their home synods. When asked about creative calls for deacons, especially in agencies outside the church, Bishop Dunlop stated, “If we are aware of agencies with openings then we talk to deacons who match the needs and encourage them to apply. Often, we do not know when agencies have openings”. These two issues are prime reasons for deacons not receiving calls. It is evidence of a pastor-centric process as well as the need for our synods and bishops to do more when it comes to placing deacons in calls. More emphasis may be needed by synod staff to communicate with congregations and agencies on the benefits of calling a deacon, before a call is warranted.

One of the survey questions that I posed to the deacons, “What challenges do you face as a deacon in the ELCA”, also revealed a lack of process for obtaining calls. These are a few of the responses:

⁵⁷ Internal Revenue Service

“There is very little assistance in obtaining a call. When the candidacy committee approved me in 2013 I was told ‘to print up business cards and knock on church doors’ by the churchwide representative.”

“The greater church has no idea what to do with us, and people aren’t aware that we exist.”

Deacons feel like the “ugly stepchild” in ministry and the only way to get a call is to be your own advocate.

The good news for the roster of deacon is a study being conducted by Tim Snyder, PhD, the Senior Researcher & Visiting Assistant Professor of Practical Theology at Wesley Theological Seminary, who is partnering with ELCA Research and Development to study these same issues that are presented in this paper. The work of this paper will be used for his study.

Chapter 4 – From Liturgy to Diakonia

*From the halls of power to the fortress tower,
not a stone will be left on stone.
Let the king beware for your justice tears
Every tyrant from their throne.
The hungry poor shall weep no more,
for the food they can never earn;
These are tables spread, ev'ry mouth to fed,
For the world is about to turn.⁵⁸
-stanza 3, Canticle of the Turning*

Liturgy is often translated into “the work of the people” and consists of components of public worship, using communal response and participation in the worship service. Diakonia is fed from the liturgy in the church, from its sacramental liturgies, music, scriptures, prayers, sermon and the sending. Lutheran liturgy is where diakonia starts and we are sent out to be the hands, feet and voice of Christ in the world.

We as a worshipping body gather to hear the word, be fed and to be sent back out into the world. This tension between worship inside the church and being sent out into the world is essential to the nature of the church. The liturgy is food for the journey.

⁵⁸ Evangelical Lutheran Worship. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2006, 724

Baptism and Affirmation of Baptism

Christian baptism draws the believer into a ecclesial relationship within the life of the church. The sacrament of baptism and the affirmation of baptism initiates one into the Christian community; a community that affirms the priesthood of all believers, a community that is called to further the kingdom of God here on earth.

One way of furthering the kingdom is through diakonia. Diakonia is not only a function or a job. It is a way of life, of being and loving, which is expressed in many different jobs and functions. This ministry begins at our baptisms. The call to diakonia is present in our Lutheran baptismal liturgy as well as our Affirmation of Baptism or Confirmation liturgy. Parents and sponsors promise on behalf of their children, “to proclaim Christ through word and deed, care for others and the world God made, and to work for justice and peace.”⁵⁹

The liturgy of the Affirmation of Baptism, also known as confirmation, is used with our youth, often in grades 8 or 9, and it’s an opportunity for young people to affirm for themselves the promises that their parents, sponsors and congregation made for them at their baptism. The confirmand pledges to “proclaim the good news of God in Christ Jesus through word and deed, to serve all people, following the example of Jesus, and to strive for peace and justice in all the earth.”⁶⁰

Understanding the meaning of all promises we make at our confirmations is crucial in our Christian walk. Every baptism and confirmation we witness should be a reminder of our own promises made. These rites in our churches are a good time for us to reflect how we are proclaiming the good news through evangelism, and ways in which we strive for peace and

⁵⁹ Evangelical Lutheran Worship.228.

⁶⁰ Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 236.

justice in all the earth. These should not be seen as empty promises made at a baptism or affirmation of baptism. These promises should be kept in front of us through Christian education, sermons and our service ministries.

The Eucharist

The eucharist embraces all aspects of life. It is a representative act of thanksgiving and offering on behalf of the whole world. The eucharistic celebration demands reconciliation and sharing among all those regarded as brothers and sisters in the one family of God and is a constant challenge in the search for appropriate relationships in social, economic and political life (Matt. 5:23f; I Cor. 10:16f; I Cor. 11:20—22; Gal. 3:28).

All kinds of injustice, racism, separation and lack of freedom are radically challenged when we share in the body and blood of Christ. Through the eucharist, the all-renewing grace of God penetrates and restores human personality and dignity. The eucharist involves the believer in the central event of the world's history. As participants in the eucharist, therefore, we prove inconsistent if we are not actively participating in this ongoing restoration of the world's situation and the human condition.

The eucharist shows us that our behavior is inconsistent in the face of the reconciling presence of God in human history: we are placed under continual judgment by the persistence of unjust relationships of all kinds in our society, the manifold divisions on account of human pride, material interest and power politics.⁶¹

Another way of connecting the eucharist to the ministry of diakonia is going back to the original greek meaning of waiting tables and food. The deacons in the early church were

⁶¹.lazareth, William, and Nikos Nissiotis . "World Council of Churches." In Baptism Eucharist and Ministry, 111, 12..

responsible for making sure there was equitable food distribution among all people. Diakonia in relation to food and table fellowship involves issues of reciprocity, hospitality, and sharing.⁶²

All are participating in table fellowship when we come to the table of the Lord, and we continue this practice of sharing outside the walls of the church. The 1982 report, Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry from the World Council of Churches states this about the Eucharist:

The Eucharist embraces all aspects of life. It is a representative act of thanksgiving and offering on behalf of the whole world. The Eucharist celebration demands reconciliation and sharing among all those regarded as brothers and sisters in the one family of God and is a constant challenge in the search for appropriate relationships in social, economic and political life. All kinds of injustice, racism, separation and lack of freedom are radically challenged when we share in the body and blood of Christ.⁶³

One can contend that the heart of diakonia is the Eucharist where Christ heals us by sharing his body.

Lutheran liturgy of the meal also includes the offering. In the Evangelical Lutheran Worship book, in the section titled “Scripture and Worship”, the following scriptures are shared as it pertains to offering,

“Is not this the fast that I choose...to share your bread with the hungry, and to bring the homeless poor into our house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?” - Isaiah 58:6-7

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” - Mathew 25:35

The liturgy of the Eucharist has a diaconal dimension, the offering is a collection of gifts that are to be distributed to the work of the church, and to those in need. We come to a table to be fed and nourished to go out and do the work of Christ in the world.

⁶² Erica Meijers, “Come and Eat, Table Fellowship as a Fundamental Form of Diaconia,” *Diaconia: Journal for the Study of Christian Social Practice* 10, no. 1 (December 2019): pp. 85-111, 92.

⁶³ .Iazareth, William, and Nikos Nissiotis . “World Council of Churches.” In Baptism Eucharist and Ministry,

The Word

As stated in chapter 1, “Biblical Mandate and Scriptural Foundations”, our scriptural readings during our worship include writings that describe and/or mandate diakonia. The word of God is filled with imagery of diakonia. The Lutheran lectionary cycle includes an old testament reading, a psalm, an epistle and a gospel reading. Unfortunately, we often miss many of the Old Testament prophets that spoke truth to power and stood up for those on the margins of society; those who were being mistreated.

As preachers, we may need to tease out the diaconal message. For deacons who preach, it is helpful to use a prophetic lens in which to preach. Walter Brueggemann’s claim of prophetic proclamation provides a useful starting point for developing this biblical approach. In his *Finally Comes the Poet: Daring Speech for Proclamation*, Brueggemann says,

Broadly construed, the language of the biblical text is prophetic: it anticipates and summons realities that live beyond the conventions of our day-to-day, take-for-granted world. The Bible is our firm guarantee that in a world of technological naiveté and ideological reductionism, prophetic constructs of another world are still possible, still worth doing, still longingly received by those who live at the edge of despair, resignation, and conformity. Our preferred language is to call such speech prophetic.⁶⁴

Brueggemann’s use of the language of prophetic speech is a major component of diaconal ministry. Deacons have the chance to shape sermons that include opportunities to describe how the passage informs diakonia and our call to action. As Lutheran preachers, we strive to make sure we proclaim Law and Gospel. Preaching on serving our neighbor can quickly turn into “works righteousness” unless we surround it within the good news of the death and resurrection of Jesus. As Lutherans, we believe we are saved by grace, not by works, which can seem puzzling to some persons in our congregation. If works are not salvific, I don’t have to do them.

⁶⁴ Brueggemann, Walter. *Finally Comes the Poet: Daring Speech for Proclamation*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1998, 4.

As preachers, we speak of serving not only out of love for our neighbor, but out of gratitude that we have the opportunity to serve since our salvation has already been taken care of by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. We have the privilege to serve others on behalf of God in Christ Jesus.

For example, Matthew 25 is probably one of the most recognized parables pertaining to serving your neighbor. On surface reading, it seems that one cannot dispute the reasons Christ gives us to serve our neighbors. Of course we serve Jesus by serving our neighbors. We see ourselves as the sheep who serve Jesus, not the goats who are biding their time waiting for the Messiah to show up. I would contend that most of our congregants believe they are the sheep in the parable.

Reading through a diaconal lens tells us that we are both the sheep and the goats, or saints and sinners at the same time. This passage doesn't give us a pass because we donate to charities or volunteer at the church. In this lesson, both the sheep and the goats ask, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink?" – Neither group saw Jesus as being served. The difference was that the sheep didn't do it for altruistic reasons, they did it because it was the right thing to do. We also do it not only because it is the right thing to do, but we do it out of gratitude for the life, death and resurrection of Jesus that saved us from worrying about working towards our salvation. Serving others is not an insurance policy that we collect on to get into heaven. We serve others to help bring about the kingdom of God here on earth, to bring about transformation in the lives of others. Matthew 25 convicts even those of us who identify as sheep, because we constantly need to examine our motivations. Prophetic language or preaching helps the listener discern their role within the biblical story and to put it into a contemporary context.

Music

Music in our worship service and can be used as an aid to pastoral and educational ministry of the church.⁶⁵ Hence, church music has a definite place and part in the nurturing of the saints in the plan of God. Throughout church history, there had been an array of music being used as a means of teaching doctrinal truths and acting as a facilitator of spiritual nourishment, which is the core objective of educational ministry. Many times, great hymns have been the missionary's strongest weapon, the evangelist's most effective soul-winner, the pastor's finest illustration, and the worshipper's surest doorway to an enriching experience with God.⁶⁶

The Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW) book contains many hymns and psalms that describe the hymn writers' understanding of God and God's love, mercy, justice and service towards creation. Hymns in this resource should reflect current Lutheran theology. Music and hymnody in the service should bolster the message of the Gospel and other scriptural passages.

A few examples of lyrics with a diaconal theme found in the ELW:

The refrain from the song, We Are Called found on page 720 reads, "We are called to act with justice, we are called to love tenderly; we are called to serve one another, to walk humbly with God."

Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love found on page 708 talks about the service that Jesus has modeled by washing the feet of his disciples and describes our neighbors as "wealthy, poor, varied in color and race".

⁶⁵ Ojo, Temitope R. "RE-APPRAISING CHURCH MUSIC AS A VIABLE TOOL FOR NURTURING SPIRITUAL GROWTH." Practical Theology, August 2015, 155.

⁶⁶ Ojo, Temitope R. Practical Theology, 155.

According to the paper entitled “Exploring Musical Riches in Evangelical Lutheran Worship” by the ELCA, music can be a means of healing and reconciliation. By the power of God’s Spirit, music can encourage and sustain health. By bringing to voice the needs for healing, the community is called to forgiveness and reconciliation. Facing the needs for healing in a congregation and in the lives of its members is also an act of seeking justice”.⁶⁷

This document also states in principle M17 that “music serves God’s mission. The assembly is gathered and sent out in song, bearing the witness of Christ to each other and all they encounter. Through music, the Holy Spirit empowers the assembly to participate in God’s mission to the world.”⁶⁸

The hymnody in the ELW contains many hymns that serve as catalysts for serving our neighbors, both near and far, in need. Music is another vehicle for the Holy Spirit to enter our hearts and minds to work on behalf of peace, mercy and justice.

The Sending

The final act in our worship service, before the postlude, is known as “the sending”. The sending calls us to go outside of the walls of the church to bring peace, justice and service towards God’s creation. “Go in peace, serve the Lord”, reminds us that serving God also means serving our neighbor.

The Evangelical Lutheran Worship book has this to say about the sending, “God blesses us and sends us out in mission to the world. God’s mission includes the gifts of grace that we

⁶⁷ “Exploring Musical Riches in Evangelical Lutheran Worship,” The ELCA (The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America), accessed December 8, 2020, http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Formation_ELW_Exploring_Musical_Riches.pdf, 17.

⁶⁸ “Exploring Musical Riches in Evangelical Lutheran Worship, pg. 18.

share in worship and take to the absent; now, we are sent to continue our participation in God's mission. With the blessing of God, we go out to live as Christ's body in the world."⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 93.

Chapter 5 – Called to be a Prophetic Witness

There is no theological teaching of Luther that is politically innocent. His theology and politics must be distinguished but never separated. Luther himself is thus the first and best witness that the so-called, “Two-Kingdoms Doctrine” does not lead to political abstinence but exactly the opposite: the world as a whole with its problems and decisions is now discovered as the subject of Christian responsibility.⁷⁰

The church is called to be in the public world with a public voice. “Private” literally means to be deprived of public life. In ancient Greece, women, children and slaves were excluded from the public (full, human status) and confined to the private sphere.⁷¹ The prophetic role of diaconal ministry is to see God's intention for the creation, to critique what is going on in the church and world, to protest against evil and injustice, and to call the Church and world – all people – to respond in ways that will transform the world.⁷²

Luther's Two Kingdoms

According to Lutheran social teachings, there are two kingdoms: the kingdom on the right, which is the kingdom of God through the church and the kingdom on the left, the secular kingdom of the world. These two realms are the ways that God rules: the kingdom of the church, or the gospel realm, where the Gospel is preached, and the realm of civil rule, where God rules through magistrates, civic structures and governments. Many in the church understand this to articulate the separation of the church from the political realm. Luther believed that the two realms are supposed to serve each other and that the spiritual realm is to radiate into the realm of the world.⁷³ As people who live in both realms, diakonia takes the Gospel out from the church into the world.

⁷⁰ Ryan P. Cumming, *The Forgotten Luther II: Reclaiming the Church's Public Witness* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2019), 10.

⁷¹ Norma Cook Everest, “Diaconal Ministry from the Open Tomb to the Open World,” 181.

⁷² World Diakonia Federation

⁷³ Prill, Thorsten. “Martin Luther, the Two Kingdoms, and the Church.” *Evangel* 23, no. 1 (2005): 18.

Luther believed that while all people must respect the secular authorities, Christian preachers have the duty to rebuke rulers who interfere in the church.. In other words, church authority intervenes when it's own task of preaching the Gospel is impeded by government structures.

Another way to understand the theology of the two kingdoms is using personification. The secular realm or the kingdom on the left is guided by God's left hand. God gives human beings the gift of intellectual reason, scientific understanding and free will. God's left-hand governing extends then into establishing our most basic human relationships and enduring social life and institutions (family, work, citizenship and other institutional arrangements for creating and preserving human and environmental well-being).⁷⁴ We are God's hands in this secular world and as God's co-creative creatures, we serve our neighbors in solidarity and love, seeking justice, peace and well-being.

The church has the role of being a guardian of the Gospel.. The church exists in the temporal world and cannot withdraw from it and occupy a neutral position. Christians are called to work in the temporal world to usher in the kingdom of God.

Diakonia can be seen as the bridge between the two realms. We are commanded to love God, which is the gospel realm on the right, and love our neighbor, which represents the civic realm on the left. Gary Simpson, professor of systematic theology at Luther Seminary, perfectly sums up the role of diakonia in Luther's two kingdoms, or realms, as he states there are five advantages of Luther's two kingdom theology:

⁷⁴ Simpson, Gary, "How Luther Helps Today's Citizens." Living Lutheran, October 17, 2016. <https://www.livinglutheran.org/2016/10/luther-helps-todays-citizens/>.

1. Luther distinguished God's left-hand and right-hand ways to govern, first of all, to ensure that the gospel remains gospel and, secondly, to ensure that the law remains law. The integrity of both of God's hands is thereby honored. Indeed, God has the whole world in God's hands, "both" of them.
2. For his time Luther had a full-bodied notion of reason, borrowed from Cicero, which is why he strongly advocated for universal education. God desires that we, too, employ the best worldly wisdom available to us in our time.
3. Famously, Luther noted that Christians seek human welfare as we "put on our neighbors" as Christ has "put on" us. In this way, Christian faith enlists the capacities of full-bodied, enfleshed reason in order to serve our neighbors.
4. Citing Psalm 82, Luther urged citizens and political authorities to promote social justice with special attention to the most vulnerable among us: "Give justice to the weak and the orphan; maintain the right of the lowly and the destitute." Doing so, citizens become "partakers of Divine majesty."
5. Exercising our citizenship is the joyous experience of sharing in God's left hand governing, which we do with other Christians, with those of other faiths, and with those of no particular religious faith at all. We can "joyfully enjoy the joyful things when they are present," as Luther once encouraged his students.⁷⁵

Simpson's understanding gives us an understanding of how the theology of the two kingdoms, or realms, helps us to bridge the church and the world. Luther's writings guide us on how to work on behalf of our neighbors in the political realm, to vote for legislation that lifts up those on the margins of our society. We "exercise our citizenship" by voting, protesting unfair practices that are hurting God's people, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, religion or sexual identity. If our feet are in both kingdoms, then we cannot ignore the call of the Gospel to work in the world.

As Lutheran Christians who live in the United States of America, we can look to the Constitution of the United States that states, "We the People of the United States, in Order to

⁷⁵ Simpson, Gary, and . "How Luther Helps Today's Citizens." *Living Lutheran*, October 17, 2016. <https://www.livinglutheran.org/2016/10/luther-helps-todays-citizens/>.

form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”⁷⁶

We establish justice, tranquility and promote general welfare by living out a gospel centered life. This is having your feet in both the civic and the gospel realms.

Public Witness in the Pulpit and the Church

Many congregations believe that politics should be kept out of the pulpit. They often cite the “Separation of Church and State”. There appears to be a misunderstanding of the actual meaning of this Jeffersonian phrase. The expression “separation of church and state” can be traced to an 1802 letter that Thomas Jefferson wrote to a group of men affiliated with the Danbury Baptists Association of Connecticut. In this letter he stated that religion was “a matter which lies solely between Man & his God,” and that the government should not have any influence over religious opinions. Therefore, he asserted: “I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should ‘make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,’ thus building a wall of separation between Church & State.”⁷⁷

Jefferson was not suggesting that religious people or religious motivations should be exiled from public debate. As a matter of fact, the letter was from a religious people appealing to an elected official for their rights — an elected official who, by the way, attended church services during his administration inside the United States Capitol.

⁷⁶ “The Constitution of the United States: A Transcription.” National Archives and Records Administration. National Archives and Records Administration, May 2020. <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript>.

⁷⁷ “Separation of Church and State,” Home | Teachinghistory.org (Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media at George Mason University, 2018), <https://teachinghistory.org/>.

We are theological heirs of a public and political theologian, Martin Luther, who wrote over one thousand letters to civil authorities condemning public policies that thwarted the well being of the poor. Luther also admonished preachers to preach against injustice and against economic injustice and practices that resulted in oppression of the poor. Luther spoke publicly regarding political, military, economic and theological issues and took stands on which he staked his life.⁷⁸

Martin Luther believed that political problems should be addressed in the pulpit. In a 1529 sermon on Jesus before Pilate, Luther stated: “Christ has shown and taught us that one should not keep silence about the truth before powerful men and lords, but should rather admonish and rebuke them for their injustice...A Christian should bear witness to the truth and die for the sake of the truth. If, then, he is to die for the sake of the truth, he must confess the truth with his lips and rebuke the lie.”⁷⁹

Public witness not only occurs inside the church pulpit, but in the pulpit of the public square. During the early 20th century after the start of the great depression, American Lutheran pastors and journals began writing about issues that affected the church and citizens of the United States. During the first hundred days of the new administration in 1933, Lutheran periodicals were cautiously supportive of Roosevelt's attempts to pull the country out of economic depression.⁸⁰ Lutheran journals called for Christian support of Roosevelt and his New Deal. Several Lutheran newspapers featured the blue NRA eagle on their pages with its slogan “We Do Our Part.”⁸¹ It was evident that the Lutheran church of the early 20th century did not

⁷⁸ Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda, *Public Church: for the Life of the World* (Minneapolis, Minn, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2004), 42.

⁷⁹ Ryan P. Cumming, *The Forgotten Luther II: Reclaiming the Church's Public Witness*, 21.

⁸⁰ Mark Allen Granquist, “Lutherans and the New Deal,” *Journal of the Lutheran Historical Conference* 5 (2015): pp. 127-141, 131.

⁸¹ Mark Allen Granquist, “Lutherans and the New Deal,” 132.

see a conflict in speaking about political issues inside and outside the walls of the church. The church leaders were concerned for the welfare of all people and felt it was their obligation to speak out.

As ministers of **word** and service, deacons too are called to diaconal preaching in the pulpit as well as the public square. This can be risky, especially as we confront social and political issues that are considered “hot button” topics that may dissolve a type of perceived unity in the church. Many preachers who long to heed the church’s expectation that they testify against injustice and oppression may fear alienating congregational members by their prophetic witness.⁸²

As a deacon whose call is to serve a congregation and as a deacon who preaches, I am often criticized for preaching sermons that call out injustices and have received many letters and emails that have been less than cordial. I wish I could say it gets easier and the stings from rebukes seem to lessen, I wouldn’t be truthful. As Lutheran Christians, we are subject to our Affirmation of Baptism promises that require us to “serve all people following the example of our Lord Jesus and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth.”

As preachers, we can look to the works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, German theologian and pastor who lived during Nazi Germany. He argued, “As much as the Christians would like to remain distant from political struggle, nonetheless, even here the commandment of love urges the Christian to stand up for his neighbor.”⁸³ This includes standing up and speaking out in the pulpit.

⁸² Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda, *Public Church: for the Life of the World*, 44.

⁸³ Hale, Lori B, and Reggie L Williams. “Is This a Bonhoeffer Moment? Lessons for American Christians from the Confessing Church in Germany.” *Sojourners*, February 2018, 19

We can also look to the ultimate preacher, Jesus Christ himself, who gives us an example of how to preach on behalf of our neighbors, peace and justice. Bonhoeffer argued that the Sermon on the Mount was a set of teachings that consisted of “dyadic antithesis” of renunciation. Bonhoeffer read the sermon to say “you have heard it said... but I tell you...” with Christ highlighting negative behavior that we are to renounce.⁸⁴ The teachings of Jesus always included neighbor love and had many examples of calling out victimization of the marginalized in society.

Lutheran Social Statements

The ELCA addresses social concerns through social statements. According to the ELCA, Addressing social concerns as a church involves many dimensions and occurs in many ways, but can be summarized as:

- Supporting the vocation of members in their daily callings and work
- Encouraging learning and moral discernment
- Developing and endorsing social teaching and policy
- Witnessing for social justice as individual Lutheran Christians and as organized faith communities⁸⁵

The first social statements by the ELCA were created in 1991, and began with the first statement known as Church in Society, a Lutheran Perspective. This statement provides answers for how the church (members, congregations and other expressions) operates in the public arena⁸⁶

There are currently 13 social statements from 1991 to 2019, from Abortion to Sexism. Currently a social statement is being created that deals with being a church in the public square.

⁸⁴ Williams, Reggie L. “Christ-Centered Concreteness: The Christian Activism of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Luther King, Jr.” *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 53, no. 3 (2014): 189.

⁸⁵ “Addressing Social Concerns,” ELCA.org, accessed December 8, 2020, https://www.elca.org/en/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Addressing-Social-Concerns?_ga=1.147733054.825230763.1464708174.

⁸⁶ “‘Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective’ Social Statement Summary,” The ELCA, accessed December 8, 2020, https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Church_SocietySS_Summary.pdf?_ga=2.118176844.419732708.1607439919-549587704.1601385899.

All social statements result from an extensive process of participation and deliberation and are adopted by a two-thirds vote of an ELCA churchwide assembly. These statements give one an understanding of how the ELCA understands its response to specific social issues in our society and all are diaconal in nature.

In addition to the Social Statements, the ELCA has “social messages”. Social messages of the ELCA are topical documents adopted by the ELCA Church Council to focus attention and action on timely, pressing matters of social concern to the church and society. They are used to address pressing contemporary concerns in light of the prophetic and compassionate traditions of Scripture and do not establish new teaching or policy. Rather, they build upon previously adopted teaching and policy positions, especially from social statements.⁸⁷

There are currently 15 social statements that range in dates from 1988 to 2020.

⁸⁷ “Social Messages,” ELCA.org, 2020, <https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Messages>.

Chapter 6- Diakonia and Systemic Racism

The judgment of God is upon the church as never before.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

While systemic racism has always been part of our country since its founding, we could say that the year 2020 highlighted the blight of the results of systemic racism. We watched in horror as George Floyd died while in police custody, a knee pinning his neck against the hard concrete and his repeated utterances of “I can’t breathe”. While this was not the first death of a black man while in custody, this triggered a chain of events that highlighted the phrase “Black Lives Matter” and protests, marches and calls for racial justice.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church is the “whitest” mainline denomination in the United States. Our church does not reflect the demographics of our country with the ELCA boasting 96% White members and 4% people of color. In 2018, the United States reported its demographics to be 69.5% White and 30.5% people of color. It is no surprise since our roots are mainly Dutch, German and Swedish. In 1649, First Lutheran Church was founded in Albany, New York and is the oldest of the ELCA Congregations. This event happened after the first African slaves arrived in Jamestown in 1619 and before New York recognized the legality of slavery. The beginnings of the American Lutheran church were steeped in racial injustice and white supremacy. During the 1860’s, Norwegian Lutherans in Illinois debated the pros and cons of slavery which means slavery wasn’t seen by all as contrary to the Gospel.⁸⁸

As described in the introduction, diakonia is transformative and prophetic; which aims at not only reaching out to those persons on the margins of our society but is intentional at addressing root causes and helping to provide solutions that enable all of God’s people to

⁸⁸ “ELCA Racial Justice Train the Trainer.” ELCA Anti-Racism Training. Lecture presented at the ELCA Anti-Racism Training, September 2018.

flourish.⁸⁹ Systemic racism is a root cause of oppression in our society that needs to be addressed, from the pulpit to the ballot box. Deacons are called to equip the church to engage in dialogue and education that can help facilitate the dismantling of racism in our churches, and our communities.

We are called to educate our congregations to understand our role in systems in our society that perpetuate racism. This requires more than the persuasion of well-crafted words analyzing our present context and commending action to prompt participation in God's mission in such a time as this.⁹⁰ This takes the unfettered allegiance of people's hearts and minds to change the narrative of our identity, first in our own lives, then in the congregation and our communities.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer saw Nazi racism as a Christian problem and we should see systemic racism as a Christian problem as well. As white Lutheran Christians, we have the luxury to look away, to ignore the plight of our brothers and sisters of color. This is white privilege. We have the privilege to look away and ignore because we don't suffer from systemic racism. On the contrary, white Christians have benefited from systemic racism from the founding of America.

White Privilege and White Fragility

The term "white privilege" is one of those terms that causes anxiety in many white individuals and communities. White fragility occurs when the mere suggestion of being white triggers a range of emotional responses such as anger, fear, guilt and withdrawal from the stress inducing situation.⁹¹ As deacons and the church, we should help our members unpack that anxiety. It is not

⁸⁹ Ham, Carlos Emilio. "Theological Perspectives on Diakonia in the Twenty-First Century.

⁹⁰ Lori B Hale and Reggie L Williams, "Is This a Bonhoeffer Moment? Lessons for American Christians from the Confessing Church in Germany," 23.

⁹¹ Robin J. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2018), 2.

about feeling guilty for being born white. It is about recognizing those who have black and brown skin face racial, social and economic barriers that most white people do not encounter. This is not to discount those who are white and face economic barriers, but a recognition that our American society has been built on a system that privileged white European settlers and a society that was built on the backs of enslaved black and brown persons. Deacons and church leaders have the obligation to educate and speak out against racism. Racism is more than feelings of being discriminated against; it is the systematic exclusion of certain groups from having access to opportunities based on their group membership.

The church has largely remained silent when it comes to speaking out against racism. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, wrote over 57 years ago in his “Letter from Birmingham Jail” to fellow white clergymen, “I have been disappointed with the white church and its leadership. Of course, there are some notable exceptions.... But despite these notable exceptions, I must honestly reiterate that I have been disappointed with the church.... I had the strange feeling when I was suddenly catapulted into the leadership of the bus protest in Montgomery several years ago that we would have the support of the white church. I felt that the white ministers, priests, and rabbis of the South would be some of our strongest allies. Instead, some few have been outright opponents, refusing to understand the freedom movement and misrepresenting its leaders; all too many others have been more cautious than courageous and have remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of stained-glass windows”.⁹²

Lutheran social statements include *Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture* which was adopted by the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in 1993. This study examines the role in racism in our culture and concludes that racism is a mix of power, privilege and prejudice.

⁹² King, Martin Luther. Letter to Fellow Clergymen. “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” April 16, 1963.

(Racism) is sin, and a violation of God's intention for humanity. Racism deforms relationships and harms sense of self. Its effects vary, depending on factors such as gender or economic situation.⁹³ This statement continues, "Those with access to opportunities, power and institutions remain separate from those without such access, whose cultures often have been ridiculed and reviled, or destroyed. The ELCA expects our leadership to name the sin of racism and lead us in our repentance. In a hostile and divided world, the church must insist on justice, resist cynicism, and refuse to blame victimized people. To pursue justice, the church must address how racism affects society, political decisions and economic forces as well as individual lives."⁹⁴

In 2019, the ELCA adopted the Declaration of the ELCA to People of African Descent. This statement apologizes to people of African descent for the church's complicity in slavery, and the perpetuation for racism in the church.⁹⁵ Unfortunately most of our congregations are not aware of the social statement from 1993 or the apology statement from 2019. More education needs to be done in order to help change hearts and minds as it pertains to understanding systemic racism.

For instance, I read social media posts by members of my congregation and it pains me to read posts that are uninformed about the evil of systemic racism. I wish I could say that speaking out from the pulpit was easy and the congregation's hearts and minds were changed. My goal is for people to experience a type of "metanoia", a change of heart and mind. My experience has been a mixture of affirmation for my words and condemnation, followed up by

⁹³ "Race, Ethnicity and Culture," Faith and Society (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2020), <https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Race-Ethnicity-and-Culture>.

⁹⁴ "Race, Ethnicity and Culture".

⁹⁵ "Declaration of the ELCA to People of African Descent." The ELCA, 2019.

https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Slavery_Apology_Explanation.pdf.

This is a statement of apology and an explanation of the apology. The roots of this statement of apology comes from the ELCA social statement, Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture which was adopted by the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in 1993.

nasty emails and letters to my church council. The rebukes certainly sting, especially with congregants with whom I have had a long and congenial relationship. Deacons and the church are both called to use our prophetic voices to call out injustice, to educate on societal injustices and to work in solidarity with our brothers and sisters of color until all of God's children are treated with fairness and equity. It is risky to speak out with the understanding that people will be offended. However, this is part of the call of the deacon and we must not shirk our duties to seek an end to injustice for all people, especially those who are on the margins of our "white" society.

The 2016 churchwide assembly adopted a policy that all church leaders need to be "trained" on racism. In my opinion, this is just the tip of the iceberg. We can start with our rostered leaders, but education needs to trickle down to our church councils, ministry volunteers and our parishioners. At this point in time, rostered leaders are required to take training every two years on racism. This is a start, but it is not helpful to have the same training every two years without expanding on the effects of systemic racism not only in our church but in our culture as well. According to Rev. Lenny Duncan, a black pastor in the ELCA, "dismantling white supremacy and the constructs of whiteness is a lifelong journey, so we (the church) need to offer accompaniment on that road".⁹⁶

Diakonia as Transformation

Rev. William J. Barber II, co-founder of the Poor People's Campaign, said, "Faith-rooted moral dissent requires that we always look forward toward the vision of what we know we were made to be." As Christians, we are to continually work towards the transformation of our society and usher in the Kingdom of God. Diakonia can be informed by the theology of the cross.

⁹⁶ Lenny Duncan, *Dear Church: A Love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the US* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2019), 19.

Bonhoeffer had this to say about the theology of the cross, “from below, from the perspective of the outcast, the suspects, the maltreated, the powerless, the oppressed, the reviled – in short, from the perspective of those who suffer is an experience of incomparable worth.”⁹⁷

For Christians, especially those in positions of economic, racial, or societal privilege, moral discernment is fatally flawed if it does not begin with the cries of the poor and the oppressed; those whose survival, dignity and/or human rights are at risk. Transformation can only begin when we as individuals and as the collective church begin at the foot of the cross.

We look at the cross of Jesus to understand God. We see that this God has chosen to enter this world to suffer alongside those who suffer. Jesus, God in human flesh, knows what it means to be executed. Jesus knows far more than any of us the trauma that comes from racism, black men being shot while in police custody, the trauma from food insecurity and trauma from lack of basic needs, of homelessness and the effects of war.

In the synoptic gospels, we observe the social emphasis on diakonia and economic solidarity in Luke, because of the problem of poverty and a wealth gap is apparent. The conversion of the rich is connected with metanoia, or the transformation of one’s life and they are awakened to social engagement with the poor.⁹⁸ The magnitude of diakonia is expressed in our participation as servants of God in bringing about transformation.

Diakonia seeking transformation is service that makes the celebration of life possible for all.⁹⁹ Truly authentic diakonia involves both comforting the victim and confronting the powers

⁹⁷ Moe-Lobeda, Cynthia D. *Public Church: for the Life of the World*, 66.

⁹⁸ Chung, Paul S. “Diakonia and Economic Justice.” *The Ecumenical Review* 66, no. 3 (October 2014): 303.

⁹⁹ Phiri, Isabel Apawo, and Kim Dongsung. “Called to Be a Diaconal Community through a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace.” *The Ecumenical Review* 66, no. 3 (2014): 255.

that oppress. It must bring healing and reconciliation to the victim as well as the one who victimizes. Diaconal transformation cannot be divorced from advocacy for justice and peace.¹⁰⁰

I am reminded of Matthew 18, in which the author of Matthew is writing about problems in the community. In Matthew 18:15-20, Jesus tells us that we are to confront sin and if the sinner doesn't listen, bring in others and finally the church if needed. If there is no repentance on part of the sinner, then the community can remove the sinner from the community. Matthew 18:21-30 goes on to talk about behavior in the community. While forgiveness seems to be the main subject of this passage, it seems that forgiveness only comes after repentance of metanoia, the change of heart and mind to better behavior on part of the sinner. The parable of the Lost Sheep found in Matthew 18:10-14, signals that God wants full restoration of the sinner to the Christian community. Matthew 18 is a great example of the process of transformation on the part of the sinner, those sinned against and ultimately the community. Transformation can only happen when we confront the sinner and the sin, seek full repentance and finally forgiveness and restoration to the whole community.

At our baptisms, we are endowed with gifts from the Holy Spirit and empowered to carry out our callings as disciples to bring about transformation. Deacons can help equip congregations to understand and use their individual and corporate gifts in which to engage in transformative prophetic diakonia. We are all called to bear prophetic witness that ushers in God's reign into every aspect of our communal life together. Our transforming actions can empower our congregations to be communities of healing and compassion that "seed the Good News so justice will grow and God's deep peace can rest on the world."¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Phiri, Isabel, "Called to Be a Diaconal Community", 256.

¹⁰¹ Phiri, Isabel, "Called to Be a Diaconal Community", 256.

Transformation cannot happen without identifying with Christ, identifying with the suffering of the world, with the oppressed, the poor, the disenfranchised, the abused. The diaconate calls the whole church, clergy and laity, to see the suffering of the world and to be involved. We are to bear one another's burdens not to make others dependent, but to express solidarity and support, to be agents of healing and hope.¹⁰²

¹⁰² Diakonia World Federation

Chapter 7 – The Role of the Professional Deacon

As Christ chose and sent the apostles, Christ continues through the Holy Spirit to choose and call persons into the ordained ministry. As heralds and ambassadors, ordained ministers are representatives of Jesus Christ to the community, and proclaim his message of reconciliation. As leaders and teachers, they call the community to submit to the authority of Jesus Christ, the teacher and prophet, in whom law and prophets were fulfilled. – Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry

The term deacon itself can cause confusion. Many churches have a ministry of deacons, but the form in the diaconate varies widely. According to Paul Avis, an anglican priest and theologian,

In the Orthodox tradition, the deacon is mainly (but not exclusively) and liturgical assistant. Protestant churches have a tradition of deacons as pastoral workers, active in social care or educational work of the church. In the Reformed tradition, deacons are regarded as ordained, but not as ministers of word and sacrament. In the roman Catholic and Anglican traditions, the diaconate is primarily the first of three holy orders of deacon, priest and presbyter. In the Orthodox tradition Congregations understand the term “deacon” differently.¹⁰³

Some congregations refer to an assisting minister as a deacon, a lay person who is ‘trained’ to help lead worship. Lay deacons in the Lutheran church are not the same as the rostered deacons and there seems to be a lack of education in understanding the differences. It may be time that we change the name to those who assist at the table as lay ministers instead of deacons. Since this roster of deacon is new as is the rite of ordination, we may need to not only change titles, but educate our church as well.

This chapter pertains to the rostered deacon in the ELCA, who is an ordained minister of word and service called by a congregation or other body synodically to begin specialized ministry in an institution. This gives the rostered deacon more freedom when it comes to

¹⁰³ Paul Avis, “Ecclesiology,” *Ecclesiology*, 2009, pp. 3-6, 3.

obtaining a first call. This freedom allows the deacon to work for justice in the name of the church in areas that are underserved and to bring the Gospel to where it may be needed most.

The professional diaconate in the ELCA is beginning to claim new authority in the twenty-first century church. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* was written by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches in 1982 and adopted in 1983. This document was written to advance the visible unity within the universal church, and one of the essential prerequisites is that they should be in basic agreement on baptism, eucharist and ministry.¹⁰⁴ The role of the deacon is found in the section on ministry.

Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry includes the role of deacon into the threefold pattern of Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons. According to the document, the bishop was the leader of the community who was ordained to proclaim the word and preside over the eucharist while surrounded by the presbyters and deacons who assisted in the tasks. It further states that this traditional threefold pattern may need to be reformed, especially as it pertains to deacons. The function of deacons has been reduced to an assistant role in the celebration of the liturgy: they have ceased to fulfill any function with regard to the diaconal witness of the Church. This document encourages churches to study how the threefold pattern in its original form may benefit the ministries. By ordaining deacons, the ELCA is following this threefold pattern and it is in line with many of our ecumenical partners, like the Episcopal Church.

The role of deacon represents to the Church the calling as servant in the world. By struggling in Christ's name with the myriad needs of societies and persons, deacons exemplify the interdependence of worship and service in the Church's life. They exercise responsibility in

¹⁰⁴Lazareth, William, and Nikos Nissiotis. "World Council of Churches." In *Baptism Eucharist and Ministry* 111, 111:1–39. Geneva: World Council of Churches, n.d., 5.

the worship of the congregation: for example, by reading the scriptures, preaching and leading the people in prayer. They help in the teaching of the congregation. They exercise a ministry of love within the community. They fulfill certain administrative tasks and may be elected to responsibilities for governance.¹⁰⁵

The deacon as it pertains to the rostering process of ELCA is considered an “ordained” minister, set apart to do ministry, paralleling the ordination of pastors. Ordination in the minds of many of our congregations pertains to only pastors and more specifically to sacramental ministry. Upon learning about the ordination of deacons, I have been asked, “Does that mean that you can now preside over the sacraments?”

It is apparent that even this simple word needs to be explained. This word pertains only to the rite of inception into the professional roster and does not correspond to the focus of ministry. While both deacon and pastor are called to minister through the word, pastors are called to perform the sacraments and shepherd the congregation. Deacons, on the other hand, are called to service and take the congregation out into the world. Previously, deacons were “consecrated”, which again means set apart. The church has changed the rite from consecration to ordination in 2018, which brings the ELCA in line with some of our ecumenical partners as well as puts the professional deacon on the same plane as the professional pastor.

The ELCA is on a track that is helping to lift up the professional deacon, but there is still much work to do with educating congregations, bishops and synods on the role of the deacon and the gifts a deacon can bring to a congregation. Deacons are called to be agents of the church interpreting and meeting the needs, hopes and concerns within church and society.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Lazareth, William, and Nikos Nissiotis . “World Council of Churches.” In *Baptism Eucharist and Ministry* 111, 25.

¹⁰⁶ Norma Cook Everest, “Diaconal Ministry from the Open Tomb to the Open World, 179.

Deacon as Equipping the Saints for Service

According to the ELCA Constitution, Deacons advocate in prophetic service (diakonia), which invites us to ministries of accompaniment, that equips all baptized Christians for ministry in God's mission.¹⁰⁷ Deacons are called to bring the needs of the world into the church, and are also called to equip congregations to use their gifts to respond to these needs. Deacons help the baptized carry out their baptismal promises “to proclaim Christ through word and deed, care for others and the world God made, and to work for justice and peace.”¹⁰⁸

Theologically educated ministers of word and service (deacons) are spokespersons for the faith, serving in many diverse ways in the world on behalf of the church and also within the structures of the church. For example: as promoters of literacy in the community and also as church teachers, professors, youth workers and directors of education; as social workers and counselors and also as parish nurses; as ecumenical and interfaith ministers of music and also as church musicians; as community organizers for justice and also as administrators of church-related institutions. Ministers of word and service are creative bridge builders in many directions, challenging and supporting the church in its mission and one of those missions is equipping the saints to work as the hands, feet and voice of Christ.¹⁰⁹

Our baptized members go forth from the worshipping assembly into the world every week. If we look at The Statement of Purpose of the ELCA, it begins: “The Church is a people created by God in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, called and sent to bear witness to God’s creative, redeeming, and sanctifying activity in the world.”¹¹⁰ Deacons are called to educate and

¹⁰⁷ CONSTITUTIONS, BYLAWS, AND CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,” April 30, 1987, section 7.61. 02.

¹⁰⁸ Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 228.

¹⁰⁹ Everest, Norma Cook. “Baptism and Vocation.” Chicago: Entrance Rite Discernment Group, 2017.

¹¹⁰ “CONSTITUTIONS, BYLAWS, AND CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,” April 30, 1987, Chapter 4. Statement of Purpose 4.01 and 4.01 c and e.

equip members of the ELCA to live out the statement of the church and well as the biblical mandate of neighbor love.

Diakonia is not only for the professional deacon; it is a calling (for all) that catches a glimpse of both the suffering and the risen Christ, and goes there to welcome and serve him. Education is necessary in order to equip members to carry out diakonia.¹¹¹ It is necessary to lead discernment through studying the Bible, Confessional Documents, the use of spiritual gift inventories and helping to provide avenues in which to serve using their gifts. Norma Cook Everest, distinguished Professor of Church and Ministry emerita at Wartburg Seminary, pastor and member of the Lutheran Diaconal Association, has this to say about using gifts for the sake of the world: “Each baptized person has a daily life. Not everything we do is automatically ministry, but everything we do carries the potential for ministry. People need to hear the gospel in terms of their own specific situations in order to be freed for their vocational calling. Otherwise, we would disregard the deep needs of people and the great wounds of the world”.¹¹²

Our congregations are fed by the word and are sent out into the world in order to use our gifts to further the kingdom of God. Deacons can help congregants bridge the words of the gospel in worship into action that is taken both inside and outside the church walls.

Pastor and Deacon Team

I am lucky to be part of a leadership team of four, two rostered ministers of word and sacrament (Pastor), myself as deacon and our music minister. We work together for the common good of the congregation and community; each using our own gifts and working through our perspective roles. While some of our ministries overlap, we have our own distinct ministries

¹¹¹ Marten, Diane. “An Evolving Diaconate for an Evolving Church.” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 43, no. 2 (July 2015), 191.

¹¹² Everest, Norma Cook. “Baptism and Vocation.”

from which we serve. Communication is crucial to the congregation on these distinctions. It takes time and patience in communicating and educating the members of the different roles and responsibilities.

I have heard many stories from parishioners in various Lutheran Churches about looking to call an additional pastor to their staff. This leads me to ask the question, “Why a pastor and not a deacon?” Most are unable to answer the question. In fact, most have not heard of the roster of deacon. When I explain to them the role of the deacon, they often say, “that sounds great, but we were looking for someone who could preside over communion to give the other pastor a break.”

While we could abolish this problem by allowing deacons to preside at the table, this issue is not part of this paper. Deacons, however, can preside using pre-consecrated elements from a past eucharistic service. This is usually done with the permission of the local synodical Bishop. I have been allowed in our church when we had a pastoral vacancy to preside using pre-consecrated elements. I believe this is one way that a deacon can serve at the table, especially since we allow the practice of Eucharistic ministers who administer pre-consecrated elements to our homebound and hospitalized members.

Bishop James Dunlop of the Lower Susquehanna Synod stated about the pastor-deacon team, “We have tried this (to promote the pastor-deacon team) on occasion but have not had success. The idea of a deacon is new to people and we have to sell this idea to the pastor as well.” Again, this reinforces the need for education not only for our congregations, but for our pastors or ministers of word and sacrament as well.

Being part of shared leadership means we leave our egos at the door. There may be times when a congregant feels more comfortable working with a certain team member than another.

Leadership team members must resist the urge to form “camps” among its members. Our leadership is to be fluid throughout the community. As a deacon, I may help a member learn how to advocate for someone on the margins, but I most likely would not be the one that is called for that person as it pertained to marriage counseling.

Congregations who call the team of a pastor and deacon can be enriched with rostered leaders who are equipped to be caretakers of the congregation inside the church as well as equip members to go out and engage in diakonia. Both bring unique perspectives and a sacred collegiality that can benefit the whole community.

Calls that Bridge the Church and World

The ELCA processes and assumptions make it difficult to easily match diaconal candidates with calls.¹¹³ Many times, deacons are responsible for obtaining their own calls and subsequently many calls for deacons come from informal networking. This may be easier for some deacons than others. One deacon from the survey was told to keep a business card handy in the event that she came across a possible call.

Because deacons are called to bridge the church and the world, calls that take deacons to the margins of our society should be front and foremost. This can take place in a congregational setting, but also in hospitals and other health care settings as chaplains or nurses or other health care workers. These deacons tend to the physical and spiritual health of God’s children.

Social service agencies should also be seen as appropriate calls, regardless whether the agency is Christian or secular based. Unfortunately, many faith-based agencies call pastors, because they are not aware of the work of a deacon. I would contend that most of these calls are

¹¹³ The pastoral call process is a defined biannual process that places pastors in a congregation. The understanding is that pastors serve in a parish for three years before “branching” out into non-congregational calls.

not sacramental in nature. Synods need to think outside the box when it comes to placing or allowing a deacon to have an unconventional call. A call should be anywhere people are hurting and transformation is needed for those persons to thrive in God's kingdom.

Chapter 8— What Does This Mean?

“Change will not come if we wait for some other person, or if we wait for some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.”

— Barack Obama

Understanding the need for education about diakonia and the role of the deacon requires action on part of the local congregation, the synod and the wider church. This chapter will focus on how to educate and implement strategies for comprehending our individual and corporate mandates as it pertains to neighbor love, the role of the deacon and future possibilities for diakonia in the twenty-first century.

The Need for Education About Diakonia

Many congregations want to know how to integrate their ministries into their individual communities. There are ministries that provide meals and food, clothing, tutoring, help with rent and other necessities. While this is part of diakonia, much more can be done on part of the congregations. Churches need to examine how diakonia is lived out in the everyday lives of the congregants outside of the church walls. If the Church is to be enabled to respond to contemporary challenges and participate fully in the mission of God then we need to focus on teaching the following¹¹⁴

1. How all Christians might be enabled by the Church to live out their faith with integrity by expressing diakonia in their everyday lives
2. How different understandings about how the Bible and Christian faith are understood might be applied to contemporary ministry, especially over controversial issues.
3. How the Church listens to, engages with and responds to people in wider society, especially those who are marginalized, in ways that reflect the Gospel.

How all Christians might be enabled by the Church to live out their faith with integrity by expressing diakonia in their everyday lives.

¹¹⁴ Andrew Orton, "The Diverse and Contested Diaconate: Why Understanding This Ministry Is Crucial to the Future of the Church," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 16, no. 2 (2012): pp. 260-284, 262.

Discernment and understanding our individual gifts that have been bestowed upon us is crucial in helping us to live out diakonia in our lives. Spiritual gift inventories are excellent tools for members to discern the gifts given to them by the Holy Spirit. As theologian Frederick Buechner said, “Vocation is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.” It is no coincidence that we enjoy doing what we are good at and what we are good at is probably one of the gifts endowed to us by the spirit. Using these gifts to serve God and serve our neighbor is responding to the command to love God and love neighbor.

Bible study is helpful in understanding the spiritual gifts. 1 Corinthians 12:4-8 states, “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” We have been endowed with certain gifts for the building up the kingdom of God. We are to use these gifts for the common good, to enhance the welfare of all of God’s children in God’s kingdom.

It may be understood that God’s desire is understanding and applying the diversity of spiritual abilities found within our faith communities. It is the Spirit's task to give to individual members of the community abilities that can be used within the group to enable each individual to grow in their relationship with the Lord, to grow in fellowship one with another, and to reach out to God's broken world. We need to remember that from one God there is a diversity of gifts for the common good.¹¹⁵

Educating about discipleship includes an understanding that our paid vocation and our volunteerism are part of diakonia. Luther stated that “Every occupation has its own honor before God. Ordinary work is a divine vocation or calling. In our daily work no matter how important or

¹¹⁵ Lectionary Bible studies and Sermons “1 Corinthians: The Gifts of the Spirit. 12:1-11.” Lectionary Bible Studies and Sermons. Pumpkin Cottage Ministry Resources. Accessed September 24, 2020. <http://lectionarystudies.com/>.

mundane we serve God by serving the neighbor and we also participate in God's on-going providence for the human race.”¹¹⁶ Luther believed that our work should benefit God’s kingdom here on earth and especially all of God’s children. This may make us really discern how our employment affects others. We may need to examine how and if our jobs are hurting others. This can be a difficult conversation on how to balance financially taking care of our families and living as disciples of Christ.

I have a class that I teach to our youth and adults entitled, “Marketplace Stewardship”. This class helps to teach others how to research what we buy and how we invest. We discuss local companies and their employment practices, companies that use foreign labor and how these companies invest their monies. I am very honest about the companies I boycott because of employment and investment practices. I introduce my students to the *Buycott App*, which can read barcodes to give you information on business practices and how they affect people, animals or the environment. One of them asked me, “So what if you don’t buy this or that, what difference does it really make?” to which I responded, “It makes a difference to me”. Discussing how we spend our money is another way to educate others on living with integrity as a Christian and not contributing to the exploitation of God’s children.

How different understandings about how the Bible and Christian faith are understood might be applied to contemporary ministry, especially over controversial issues.

The ELCA’s social statements are foundational for social involvement. While some are a bit dated, this is an easy way to combine scripture, doctrine and the discussion of social issues. I would contend that many are aware that the ELCA has social statements. According to the ELCA website on social statements, “ELCA social statements are teaching and policy documents

¹¹⁶ Gene Veith, “Working for Our Neighbor: Martin Luther on the Purpose of Vocation,” *Letters to the Exiles*, 2019, <https://www.letterstotheexiles.com/working-neighbor-martin-luther-purpose-vocation>.

that provide broad frameworks to assist us in thinking about and discussing social issues in the context of faith and life. They are meant to help communities and individuals with moral formation, discernment and thoughtful engagement with current social issues as we participate in God's work in the world. Social statements also set policy for the ELCA and guide its advocacy and work as a publicly engaged church. They result from an extensive process of participation and deliberation and are adopted by a two-thirds vote of an ELCA churchwide assembly."¹¹⁷

The social statements give us a glimpse inside the theology of the ELCA as it pertains to issues in our society. In 1991, the ELCA created the first social statement known as *Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective*. This statement articulates the teaching of the ELCA on the church's relation to society and its public presence and responsibilities. The statement begins with the claim that the witness of the church in society flows from its identity as a community that lives from and for the gospel. It sets forth the basic affirmations that structure how faith is active in a love that calls for justice in relationships and structures of society. The statement also identifies as basic commitments the church's institutional witness in society, the baptismal vocation of individual Christians, and the church as a community of moral deliberation.¹¹⁸

Issues that surround our ability to fulfill the command of neighbor love must always begin with scripture. This should give us a background of the Judeo-Christian story that can help us theologically understand how the authors of the scriptures saw God at work in the world. While comparing issues that were relevant pre and post Jesus may not be exactly equivalent, we do have examples of ancient world issues and how theologians grappled with a response. We then move to Lutheran doctrine which can supply us with another layer of theological

¹¹⁷ <https://www.elca.org/socialstatements>

¹¹⁸ "Church in Society," The ELCA, 2020, https://elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Church-in-Society?_ga=2.246297602.709494860.1600815396-2070066180.1597154134.

understanding. Again, we have to remember that our Lutheran confessions are over 500 years old and may not equate to the same twenty first century societal problems. However as Lutheran Christians, we value the dialectic approach as we grapple with contemporary problems and our response as Lutheran Christians.

The use of Lutheran confessional documents and the writings of Luther are also another way in which to understand diakonia. As stated earlier in the paper, we should start with promises made at our baptisms then again at our confirmations and unpack what these promises mean to us as followers of Christ. We use the Small Catechism, the understanding of Luther's Two kingdoms Doctrine and the Augsburg Confession as ways to understand Lutheran theology and diakonia.

How the Church listens to, engages with and responds to people in wider society, especially those who are marginalized, in ways that reflect the Gospel.

The church cannot stay inside the walls and pretend to know what is happening in the local communities. Community engagement can be compared to concentric circles that start with the church in the center and move outwards, engaging with local then state, then national and our international brothers and sisters who are being marginalized. Unfortunately, we do not need to look very far to find people that are suffering.

The ministry of diakonia is a positive outworking of one's faith in specific actions of service and caring for the world that God loves so much to the extent that God sent God's own son to sacrifice himself for its salvation. As such, the various ministries of service in the church engage not only for the sake of serving its neighbor, but is in service with the intention of bearing witness to the love of God made manifest in Jesus Christ. It is an effort by the faithful Christian

to share the fullness of life that is presented to the world in Jesus Christ, who is the good news of the Gospel.¹¹⁹

The ELCA has avenues in which to reach out to those who are suffering in mind, body or spirit; those who are abused, those who are living in poverty. The ELCA has an advocacy office in Washington, DC as well as a few statewide advocacy ministry offices. According to the ELCA website, “ELCA advocacy works for change in public policy based on the experience of Lutheran ministries, programs, and projects around the world and in communities across the United States. Our faith calls us to learn more and speak out on issues affecting our vulnerable neighbors and the forces threatening creation.”¹²⁰ This website has a multitude of congregational studies and resources in which to educate members on how to advocate for people who are suffering locally, nationally and globally.

I am fortunate that I live in a state that has its own Lutheran advocacy ministry; the Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania (LAMPa). According to the LAMPa website, “LAMPa’s ministry is based on ELCA Social Statements and social policy resolutions and the ELCA Constitution: ‘This church shall advocate dignity and justice for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among nations, and standing with the poor and powerless and committing itself to their need...This church shall study social issues and trends, work to discover the causes of oppression and injustice, and develop programs of ministry and advocacy to further human dignity, freedom, justice, and peace in the world.’”¹²¹ The Lutheran Advocacy resources, combined with the social statements of the ELCA is a great way to educate and to put neighbor love into action.

¹¹⁹ Phiri, Isabel Apawo, and Kim Dongsung. “Called to Be a Diaconal Community through a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace.” 253.

¹²⁰ “Advocacy- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.” www.elca.org, 2020.
<https://www.elca.org/Resources/Advocacy>.

¹²¹ Lutheran Advocacy PA, 2020. <https://www.lutheranadvocacypa.org/about/mission-ministry/>.

The ELCA also has other ministries that engage the issues that surround all of God's children in the world. AMMPARO is a holistic, whole church commitment by the ELCA, as a church in the world, to accompany migrant children today and in the future. In a holistic, whole church commitment by the ELCA, as a church in the world, AMMPARO was envisioned to accompany children who are forced to flee their communities because of complex and interrelated reasons, including chronic violence, poverty, environmental displacement and lack of opportunities in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala.¹²²

Voting is a form of diakonia since as Christians, we should vote through a gospel lens. We are tasked with taking care of our neighbor in multiple venues and voting for moral leaders who are committed to tackling systemic issues is very important. While the church cannot and should not advocate for candidates, we can advocate for just policies. Discussing the platforms of candidates and matching those platforms to the biblical story and neighbor love is needed in our congregations.

For example, when talking about immigration, we can look at the biblical stories of the Exodus of the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage as well as the flight from Egypt of the holy family in the book of Matthew. We bring in our social statement and discuss the issue of immigration using these resources. If we believe that diakonia should be transformative for people who are on the margins, then we need to look at the systemic issues that cause the need for many of our societal problems like the root cause of immigration. After discussion, we match up our Lutheran Christian values with the platforms of the candidates in which to help us discern how one should vote.

The Need for Education About Deacons

¹²² "AMMPARO." ELCA.org, 2020. <https://www.elca.org/Resources/AMMPARO>.

In the ELCA, deacons are also referred to Ministers of Word and Service. According to Lutheran Bishop Bill Gafkjen, “Deacons are called to empower and equip others, which is a keystone for the emerging ministry of deacons of the ELCA. Whatever their particular role or context – whether deeply engaged in proclamation and service in non-ecclesial contexts or serving in congregational or other "church" settings – every deacon of the ELCA has a two-fold focus to serve the neighbor and to empower, equip and encourage the people of God for their daily baptismal vocation of service to the neighbor and care of creation. This ministry is understood to be distinct from, alongside, and in mutual complementarity with the ministries of pastors of the ELCA.”¹²³

At the churchwide assembly in 2018, the ELCA voting members had voted to consolidate all three expressions under the roster of deacon. Since this is a fairly new roster, it is still misunderstood. For example, in the ELCA, there are still many different understandings of the deacon.

A number of ELCA synods have established some form of **synodical deacon** (e.g. Metro New York, Upper New York, Florida, Bahamas, Metro Chicago). In most cases, synodical deacons are trained through a specialized two-year program of study and formation. After completion of the course, participants are considered for certification by synod leadership and serve in congregations, most often their home congregation, engaging particular tasks under supervision and in partnership with the congregation’s pastor. In most cases, the deacon’s term of service is coterminous with that of the congregation’s pastor. In some synods such deacons may serve on behalf of synod leadership at the conference or synodical level, primarily engaged in administration and non-sacramental ministry (e.g. preaching, liturgical leadership) for and with

¹²³ Gafkjen, Bill. “Here a Deacon, There a Deacon, Everywhere a Deacon, Deacon.” Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, July 2014. <http://www.elca.org/>.

congregations. Most such deacons serve either as volunteers or under contract with a small stipend.¹²⁴

Congregational deacon is another term that can be confusing. Some ELCA congregations use the term “deacon” to indicate all elected members of the congregation’s leadership council. In other congregations, deacons are specific congregation council members who are tasked primarily with some aspect of the administration of the congregation or worship leadership. Some congregations use the term deacon for those lay people (whether elected or not) who assist in leading worship at or around the Table in some way (e.g. assisting ministers, communion servers, etc.). While some of these folks might receive training in partnership with other congregations, most are elected or appointed, trained and installed by and for the local congregation.¹²⁵

Deacons in the ELCA currently need to complete bachelor’s degree, a master of arts, preferably at a seminary, diaconal formation, Clinical Pastoral Education and an internship. Unfortunately, most pastors do not understand the role of the deacon or the educational requirements. At our 2019 synod assembly, a pastor who was running for the treasurer of the synod disagreed with pay equity for deacons since in her understanding, they don’t have the appropriate amount of education. We did have a sidebar discussion about this claim and she apologized for not being aware of the requirements for the roster of deacon. Unfortunately, she is not alone in her thoughts.

Most of the deacons that I interviewed suggested that more education is needed for congregations as well as pastors to fully understand the important role of the deacon. Many mentioned that some pastors saw deacons as a “threat” to their own ministries. Since the unified

¹²⁴ Gafkjen, Bill. “Here a Deacon, There a Deacon, Everywhere a Deacon, Deacon.”

¹²⁵ Gafkjen, Bill

roster of deacons is new (only formed at the 2018 churchwide assembly), there needs to be more of an emphasis on the importance of the deacon roster. Bishops need to be educated on the value of the deacon and the value of a pastor and deacon team. Pastors should be educated on the role of a deacon in the event their congregations discern the need for another rostered leader. While the ELCA has been largely pastor-centric, the diaconate models a ministry that holds companionship and empowerment as key values. The diaconate as it expresses its prophetic nature can help the church realize its mission for the sake of the world today.¹²⁶

Diaconal Formation Enabling Transformation

If we view diakonia as a means for transformation, not just serving, then it is apparent from my survey responses that more education is needed for deacons on the total understanding of diakonia. Diakonia involves not only providing resources, but confronting powers and structures that cause people to stay marginalized. Authentic diakonia is challenging the injustices and abuse of powers that continue to exploit God's people and prevent them from obtaining their basic needs. The deacons were asked in the survey, "How do you define diakonia?", and they had this to say:

"We take care of and advocate for the members of our congregation or the agency we represent!"

"church in the world"

"Service to the God and God's people"

¹²⁶ D. Michael. Jackson, Anne Keffer, and E Louise Williams, "Chapter 10," in *The Diaconate in Ecumenical Perspective: Ecclesiology, Liturgy and Practice* (Durham, DH: Sacristy Press, 2019), pp. 113-131, 131.

“Service to others through the word..... by doing, example, or through Bible Studies and preaching”

While none of these answers are incorrect, of the 50 responses I had received, there was no mention of transformation. It is evident that in our seminaries, and in our formation events, we need to educate about diakonia as a ministry that not only serves others, but seeks to transform and change systems and hearts and minds that allows others to flourish in God’s kingdom here on earth. Deacons are called to challenge the power structures that keep all of God’s people in all types of bondage.

Education on Systemic Racism

Education and participation in public life is essential to doing justice. The ELCA encourages public witness and insists on a public forum accessible to everyone. In living up to its commitment to deliberation, the ELCA will model honest engagement on issues of race. While it is an uncomfortable subject to talk about in the congregation, it is a necessary component of educating about diaconal ministry.

The ELCA social statement is a great place to begin having discussion. This is one way for our members to understand the views of their church body. The study includes the following components:

- Confessing how the church has been complicit in racism, sexism and economic injustice
- Public policy advocacy at state, federal, and international levels that seeks to eliminate racial or ethnic discrimination; the private sector advocacy that encourages corporate social responsibility for community development.
- Confronting Racism

- Becoming involved in advocacy and public witness

Education on ending racism also begins with the individual. The church can play a role in helping our members understand our own biases and prejudice as well as how as white mainline Christians, we perpetuate racism. The ELCA has mandated that rostered leaders take racial justice training every three years. However, I contend that training the leaders is not enough. We need to take it to our church councils, volunteers and members who sit in our pews. I always remember one of Dr. Phil's mantras, "You can't change what you don't acknowledge". This is particularly true when it comes to understanding our individual and communal roles in systemic racism.

The ELCA has a few resources in addition to the social statement. *Troubling the Waters for Healing of the Church; a Journey for White Christians from Privilege to Partnership* is an excellent tool to use. It has a complete curriculum and participants handouts. Another ELCA resource is called, *Breaking the Bonds, a Workshop on Internalized Racism*". This is a complete curriculum with handouts as well.

This past summer, I began a group called the Moral Monday movement that is based on a movement that began in North Carolina by Rev. Dr. William Barber of the Poor People's Campaign. Our group started reading books that discussed racism. Our small group has continued to grow with more people wanting to understand systemic racism and how to advocate for an end to this injustice not only in our local church and community but in the nation and the world.

Our first book, which I highly recommend is *White Fragility, Why it's so Hard for People to Talk About Racism* by Robin DiAngelo. DiAngelo contends that we first need to work on our

inner selves and recognize our biases and white privilege in order to work to end racism. She states in her book, “For those of us who work to raise the racial consciousness of whites, simply getting whites to acknowledge that our race gives us advantages is a major effort. The defensiveness, denial, and resistance are deep.” It is much easier to begin with a group that is open to exploring white privilege and our role in systemic racism. These discussions require trust, honesty and vulnerability on the part of the participants.

Our group has a library that we came up with that includes black and Latinx authors, playwrights and directors. We put a resource page on our church website and will continue our discussions and invite others to join us. Educating on racism continues to be a work in progress and we can’t stop until all of our siblings in Christ are treated with love and equity. In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality.... I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word.”

Chapter 9– Curriculum

This chapter will present a curriculum for congregational use. Goals and objectives are based on Marzano's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives.¹²⁷

Unit of Study: The Ministry of Diakonia

- a. Goal: Learners will have a better understanding of the ministry of Diakonia as a transformational ministry.

Lesson 1: Understanding of Diakonia

Objective: Learners will be able to define "diakonia"

Lesson 2: Diakonia as a Biblical Mandate

Objective: Learners will be able to recall the scriptures associated with diakonia

Lesson 3: Diakonia and Lutheran Confessions and Theology

Objective: Learners will be able to explain ways in which Lutheran theology inform diakonia

Lesson 4: Diakonia as Individual and Corporate ministry

Objective: Learners will be able to clarify and make connections between individual and corporate diakonia

Lesson 5: Diakonia and Systemic Racism

Objective: Learners will be able to construct an argument for confronting systemic racism as a ministry of diakonia

¹²⁷ Marzano, Robert. Marzano's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. York, PA: Learning Sciences International, 2018.

Lesson 6: Diakonia and the ELCA Social Statements

Objective: Learners will be able to articulate the views of the ELCA and social problems in the church and the world.

Lesson 7: The Role of the Rostered Deacon

Objective: Learners will be able take a position on ways a deacon can be an asset to a congregation

Lesson 1: Understanding Diakonia

Objective: Learners will be able to define “diakonia”

Opening Activity:

Have students come up with words that answer the question, what is transformational diakonia? More than likely their answers will be, “I don’t know” – and that is ok – write down all responses– encourage guesses as well. Visit wordclouds.com and put the words into the word list in the website and it will create a word cloud. (Use the Paste/Type text dialog in the edit word list) We will do this at the end of the lesson to see what learning has occurred and how our understanding has changed.

What Does This Mean Activity?

Diakonia is a service ministry that focuses on bringing about justice and wholeness in the world; from the Greek diakonos which means service. This term is a holistic concept and practice rooted in the biblical story and the ministry of Jesus Christ. It is a transformational and prophetic ministry that aims to address root causes of pain and suffering in the world¹²⁸

- How are you (personally) serving the world?
- How is your congregation serving the world?

Diaconal ministry is a broad term for the ministry of the church that bridges the church and the world. This important ministry is interested in bringing about justice and wholeness to God’s creation. This ministry includes not only taking care of immediate basic needs, but also helping to alleviate the suffering caused by unjust systems. In the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “We are not to simply bandage the wounds of victims beneath the wheels of injustice, we are to drive a spoke into the wheel itself”.¹²⁹

- How does your individual service bring change to the world?
- How do your congregational service ministries bring about justice and wholeness to the local/national or global community?

¹²⁸ “Theological Perspectives on Diakonia in the Twenty-First Century,” *Ecumenical Review* 63, no. 3 (October 2012), <https://doi.org/https://www.doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-6623.2012.00182.x>.

¹²⁹ “Notable Quotes,” The Dietrich Bonhoeffer Institute, accessed May 12, 2020, <https://tdbi.org/dietrich-bonhoeffer/notable-quotes/>.

Diakonia as Transformational Change Activity

Many persons and congregations are already participating in diaconal ministry. Food and clothing banks, drives for school supplies, Christmas presents and other items for needy people can be the staples of outreach ministries for our parishioners and congregations. While this is an important component of diaconal ministry, we are called to do much more. **Churches and individuals can view diakonia as a Christian response to people in need and situations of crisis and is characterized by actions of reaching out to them from locations of power and privilege with our resources.** It becomes a transactional situation that becomes a “band aid” instead of changing the structures that created their need for resources. Diakonia involves not only providing resources, but confronting powers and structures that cause people to stay marginalized. Authentic diakonia is challenging the injustices and abuse of powers that continue to exploit God’s people and prevent them from obtaining their basic needs.

The goal of diaconal ministry is to create a transformation for those for whom we are serving. Many churches are not taking the step to create transformation after providing basic needs. Think about ways you can take your ministries one step further- see the example in the chart (1a)

1. Fill out the chart with your individual/congregational service ministries on the first row.
2. In the second row- is this an individual outreach or congregational?
3. Third row – indicate to whom/what you are serving?
4. Fourth row – Why are you providing this ministry?
5. Fifth row – how can you go one step further to making it a transformational ministry?

Handout 1a-Diakonia as Transformational Change

Ministry	Individual or Congregational	To whom or what you are serving?	Reason for ministry	Transformational work
Clothing bank	Congregational	Students in the school district	Parents can't afford clothing for their children	Advocating for a raise in minimum wage

Follow up questions: How easy was it to come up with transformational work? How would this change your ministries? What obstacles would you face? What can you overcome these obstacles?

Scripture Study- Luke 17:11-19

Jesus Heals Ten Men with Leprosy-

Read the following passage to the group and discuss the questions:

11 Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance 13 and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!”⁴ When he saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed. 15 One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. 16 He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. 17 Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? 18 Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?” 19 Then he said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”

Discussion Questions:

- a. What was the main problem? (men were banished from society due to their leprosy)
- b. What act of service did Jesus perform? (healed them of their leprosy)
- c. How did Jesus’ act allow transformation of those with leprosy? (Allowed them to return to their community by showing themselves to the priests to be considered “clean”.)
- d. Why do you believe that the author of Luke made it a point to state that the leper who returned was a Samaritan? (They were living on the margins of Jewish society – Jews had a contempt for Samaritans)
- e. Who would be considered the Samaritans in our society who need to be “healed”?

Final Activity

Create a new word cloud at wordclouds.com and have learners now give words that pertain to their understanding of diakonia. (Use the Paste/Type text dialog in the edit word list directions) What are the changes?

Close with Prayer

Lesson 2: Diakonia as a Biblical Mandate

Objective: Learners will be able to recall the scriptures associated with diakonia

Opening Activity- Thumbs up/Thumbs down

Pass out the thumbs up/thumbs down cards to answer the following questions as a review from the last session. Click this [link](#) to obtain cards to print.

1. Diakonia is only providing for the immediate needs of a person or thing – **thumbs down**
2. The 10th leper that was healed in the story from Luke experienced a transformation not only physically but spiritually and communally – **thumbs up**
3. “Neigh Sayers” in a congregation can impede transformational diakonia – **thumbs up**
4. **Diakonia or diaconal ministry is one that looks inward – thumbs down (bridges church and world)**
5. Advocacy is part of transformational diakonia – **thumbs up**
6. Donating money can be considered a part of diaconal ministry – **thumbs up**
7. “Going Green” in your household or church is as form of diaconal ministry – **thumbs up**
8. Voting for certain candidates can be considered diaconal ministry – **thumbs up (if their platform values all life)**
9. It is not important to understand the reason for service ministry – **thumbs down – it is important to understand the who, what and why in order to work towards transformation**
10. The ministry of Jesus is an example of diaconal ministry – **thumbs up!!!**

Scripture Study

Give each learner the handout entitled, *Diakonia and Scripture (2a)*

Handout 2a-Diakonia and Scripture

Using your Bibles, look up the following scriptures and answer the questions:

1. Matthew 25:31-46
 - a. What does Jesus call his followers to do?
 - b. To whom is it done?
2. Micah 6:8
 - a. Who is being tasked with the command?
 - b. What would it look like today to:
 - i. Do Justice
 - ii. Love Mercy
 - iii. And walk humbly with God
3. Luke 13:31-35
 - a. What does Jesus ask of his followers/disciples?
4. Luke 10:25-37
 - a. What does Jesus tell the lawyers at the beginning of the story?
 - b. Who was the “hero” of the story?
 - c. What does the love of a neighbor look like in this story?
5. Hebrews 13:1-3
 - a. What does the author of Hebrews tell us as it pertains to loving/serving our neighbor?
6. Leviticus 19:33-34
 - a. How does this passage relate today as it pertains to immigration?

7. 1 John 4: 16-21

- a. In order to show our love for God, we must also love who?

8. Philippians 2:1-11

- a. Jesus emptied himself by becoming what?
- b. Whose interests are to come before our own?

9. Deuteronomy 15: 7-11

- a. What did God direct the Israelites to do to the poor?
- b. The author realized that there will always be the poor in our midst, how are we to respond?

10. Luke 3:10-14

- a. During Jesus' baptism, he tells the crowd how to treat others...how would you sum up his teachings?

Of course, this just scratches the surface of the biblical mandates to love God and love our neighbors. The word “serve” shows up over 200 times in the Bible, the word “love” appears over 500 times in the Bible. In Jesus' teachings, our relationship with our fellow men, women and children is inseparable from our relationship with God. Love of God and love of our neighbors are two aspects of the same calling:

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (NIV, John 13:34-35)

Application for Today

Brainstorm with the group answers to the following questions:

1. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the author uses a Samaritan as the hero. The Samaritans were despised by the Jews. What does this say about our “prejudice” as it pertains to those we may dislike? Who would be considered the Samaritans today?
2. In the scripture passages we read, does God give us any prerequisites about when and how we should love our neighbor? What prerequisites do we come up with before serving others?
3. Are there examples of being a disciple of Christ and not putting others first?
4. How do these scripture passages, especially the command of Christ, inform our individual and communal discipleship?

Final Activity

On an index card, write down 1 way you can serve your neighbors, either locally, nationally or globally this week.

Close with Prayer

Lesson 3: Diakonia and Lutheran Confessions and Theology

Objective: Learners will be able to explain ways in which Lutheran theology informs diakonia

Additional Resources for Use:

- The Book of Concord - ISBN 978-0800627409
- The Augsburg Confession, A Commentary - ISBN 978-0806622521
- The Online book of Concord - <https://bookofconcord.org/>

Opening Activity

Lutheran Confession Quiz (handout 3a)– how much do you know about the Lutheran Confessions/Theology? -pass out the Lutheran Confessions Quiz – learners will take it again at the end of the class.

Answers: 1 - b, 2-1, 3-c, 4-c, 5-a, 6-c, 7-b, 8-c

Confessional Study

Vocabulary and Worksheet (3b) - hand out the worksheet - go over the terms and confessional documents as a class.

Additional video resources:

The Large Catechism - The Fourth Commandment

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=feibwmB7YNU>

The Augsburg Confession - Article 6 Of New Obedience

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vaMJ6T1r0gs&list=PLgcePX5zNB9K_unLeobYThSW5Etv_iDtZy&index=9

Augsburg Confession - Article 20 - Good Works

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IMqQ2ptn-H0&list=PLgcePX5zNB9K_unLeobYThSW5Etv_iDtZy&index=23

The 10 Commandments - Thou Shalt not Kill

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJvvT_Fo5qs

Closing Activity -

Have the learners retake the opening quiz (can be done as a group)

Close with Prayer

Handout 3a-Lutheran Confessions Quiz

1. In the Augsburg Confession, Article VI. Of New Obedience, Luther states:

- a. Since we are justified by grace, good works are not necessary but can be helpful to our neighbor
- b.this faith is bound to bring forth good fruits, and that it is necessary to do good works commanded by God, because of God's will,...
- c. Faith without good works is dead

2. In the Small Catechism, Luther says this about the 8th Commandment and bearing false witness:

- a. We should fear and love God so that we may not deceitfully lie, betray, slander, or defame our neighbor, but defend him, [think and] speak well of him, and put the best construction on everything.
- b. We should fear and love God that we may not bear false witness through slander or defamation unless they are behaving in a non-Christian way.
- c. We should fear and love God, not bearing false witness through slander or betrayal; however, only if it leads to reclamation to the community

3. In the Small Catechism, Luther has this to say about the 4th petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread".

- a. Daily bread is given to pious believers of God; those who follow God's words
- b. Daily bread is a God ordained gift for all believers
- c. Daily bread includes all that support the body; food, clothing, shelter, good government, peace, health, faithful neighbors

4. In the Large Catechism, Luther has this to say about the 5th Commandment, Thou Shall Not Kill:

- a. ...under this commandment not only he is guilty who does evil to his neighbor, but he also who can do him good, prevent, resist evil, defend and save him, so that no bodily harm or hurt happens to him, and yet does not do it.
- b. If, therefore, you send away one that is naked when you could clothe him, you have caused him to freeze to death; if you see one suffer hunger and do not give him food, you have caused him to starve.
- c. Both a & b

5. In the Large Catechism, Luther has this to say about the 7th Commandment, Thou Shall Not Steal:

- a. Let this suffice as an explanation of what stealing is, that it be not taken too narrowly, but made to extend as far as we have to do with our neighbors..., to (not) do our neighbor any injury or wrong (in whatever manner supposable, by curtailing, forestalling, and withholding his possessions and property), or even to consent or allow such a thing, but to interpose and prevent it.
- b. to steal is nothing else than to get possession of another's property wrongfully, which briefly comprehends all kinds of advantage in all sorts of trade to the disadvantage of our neighbor.
- c. Luther has nothing to say other than God forbids stealing of property

6. In the Large Catechism, Luther has this to say about the 4th Commandment, Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother:

- a. He not simply commands us to love our parents, but to honor them. For with respect to brothers, sisters, and our neighbors in general.
- b. Here consider now what deadly injury you are doing if you are negligent and fail on your part to bring up your child to usefulness and piety, and how you bring upon yourself all sin and wrath, thus earning hell by your own children, even though you are otherwise pious and holy.
- c. All of the above

7. In Luther's commentary on Psalm 82, he stated that the government...

- a. serves to establish laws that allow the rich to support the poor
- b. is a "divine hospital" that cares for the poor, widows and orphans and ensures that no one will become a beggar.
- c. The government's actions do not reflect on the people

8. Luther's theology of the 2 kingdoms states....

- a. we live separately in the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world
- b. we choose daily which kingdom to inhabit which causes our actions as it pertains to the poor and needy
- c. The two kingdoms are the ways that God rules, the kingdom of the church where the Gospel is preached and the kingdom of civil rule, where God rules through magistrates, civic structures and governments

3b-CONFESSIONAL VOCABULARY AND WORKSHEET

The Augsburg Confession

Contains 28 articles that constitute the basic confession of the Lutheran churches, presented June 25, 1530, in German and Latin at the Diet of Augsburg to the emperor Charles V by seven Lutheran princes and two imperial free cities. The principal author was the Reformer Philipp Melancthon, who drew on earlier Lutheran statements of faith.

The Book of Concord

A confessional book published in 1580 that contains Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, the Augsburg Confession, the Apology [Defense] of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, the Small Catechism, the Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord. These are the official explanations of what Lutherans believe and profess.

The Large Catechism

Published by Luther in 1529, it was written for clergy to aid them in teaching their congregations. This book contains more in depth information than the Small Catechism and contains the Ten Commandments, the Apostle's Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Eucharist.

The Small Catechism

Published by Luther in 1529 for parents to use in educating their children about the understandings of the Ten Commandments, the Apostle's Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Communion, the Office of the Keys and Confession.

Good Works/Good Fruits

A person's exterior actions or deeds

Means of Grace

The grace given by the words of the Gospel, and the Sacraments

Confessional Writings

The Augsburg Confession - Article VI Of New Obedience

Also they teach that this faith is bound to bring forth good fruits, and that it is necessary to do good works commanded by God, because of God's will, but that we should not rely on those works to merit justification.

The Augsburg Confession - Article XX- Good Works

27 Furthermore, it is taught on our part that it is necessary to do good works, not that we should trust to merit grace by them, but because it is the will of God.

The Large Catechism - The Explanation of the Fourth Commandment

Thou Shalt Honor Thy Father and Mother

105 To this estate of fatherhood and motherhood God has given the special distinction above all estates that are beneath it that He not simply commands us to love our parents, but to honor them. For with respect to brothers, sisters, and our neighbors in general He commands nothing higher than that we love them, so that He separates and distinguishes father and mother above all other persons upon earth, and places them at His side.

The Large Catechism - The Fifth Commandment

Thou Shalt Not Kill

182 Now this commandment is easy enough, and has been often treated, because we hear it annually in the Gospel of St. Matthew 5:21, where Christ Himself explains and sums it up, namely, that we must not kill, neither with hand, heart, mouth, signs, gestures, help, nor counsel. Therefore it is here forbidden for everyone to be angry, except those (as we said) who are in the place of God, that is, parents and the government. For it is proper for God and for every one who is in a divine estate to be angry, to reprove and punish, namely, on account of those very persons who transgress this and the other commandments.

189 Secondly, under this commandment not only he is guilty who does evil to his neighbor, but he also who can do him good, prevent, resist evil, defend and save him, so that no bodily harm or hurt happens to him, and yet does not do it.

190 If, therefore, you send away one that is naked when you could clothe him, you have caused him to freeze to death; if you see one suffer hunger and do not give him food, you have caused him to starve. So also, if you see any one innocently sentenced to death or in like distress, and do not save him, although you know ways and means to do so, you have killed him. And it will not avail you to make the pretext that you did not afford any help, counsel, or aid thereto, for you

have withheld your love from him and deprived him of the benefit whereby his life would have been saved.

The Large Catechism - The Explanation of the Seventh Commandment

Thou Shalt Not Steal

224 For to steal is nothing else than to get possession of another's property wrongfully, which briefly comprehends all kinds of advantage in all sorts of trade to the disadvantage of our neighbor. Now, this is indeed quite a wide-spread and common vice, but so little regarded and observed that it exceeds all measure, so that if all who are thieves, and yet do not wish to be called such, were to be hanged on gallows, the world would soon be devastated, and there would be a lack both of executioners and gallows. For, as we have just said, to steal is to signify not only to empty our neighbor's coffer and pockets, but to be grasping in the market, in all stores, booths, wine- and beer- cellars, workshops, and, in short, wherever there is trading or taking and giving of money for merchandise or labor.

233 Therefore let everyone know that it is his duty, at the risk of God's displeasure, not only to do no injury to his neighbor, nor to deprive him of gain, nor to perpetrate any act of unfaithfulness or malice in any bargain or trade, but faithfully to preserve his property for him, to secure and promote his advantage, especially when one accepts money, wages, and one's livelihood for such service.

The Small Catechism - The Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer

Give us this day our daily bread...

14 What is meant by daily bread? — Answer.

Everything that belongs to the support and wants of the body, such as meat, drink, clothing, shoes, house, homestead, field, cattle, money, goods, a pious spouse, pious children, pious servants, pious and faithful magistrates, good government, good weather, peace, health, discipline, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

Discussion Questions:

1. According to the Lutheran Confessional teachings, how would you explain the obligation of good works to another?
2. What are ways God can use us to make sure everyone has basic needs for our daily bread?
3. For the Fifth commandment, thou shalt kill, Luther states that doing evil to our neighbor also means not defending, or preventing bodily harm...how do we allow bodily harm to our neighbors in their daily lives? What can be done to defend against bodily harm to others?
4. How do these writings pertain to us and our social issues today? What are we called to do?
5. How do the confessional documents exemplify diakonia?

Lesson 4: Diakonia as Individual and Corporate Ministry

Objective: Learners will be able to clarify and make connections between individual and corporate diakonia

Opening Questions:

How many of you remember your day of Confirmation? What promises did you make? If you are parents of a baptized child, what promises did you make on behalf of your child?

Affirmation of Baptism Remembrance

Hand out and recite the Affirmation of Baptism liturgy (4a)

Digging Deeper

Hand out The Digging Deeper Worksheet (4b)

Look at the promises that are made as part of the Rite of Confirmation or the Affirmation of Baptism. Fill out the worksheet, giving examples of how you are already fulfilling the promises that you have made. After, look at the gaps, what more can you do individually or as a congregation or other faith community? Share your answers.

Getting Involved

The ELCA has multiple organizations and para organizations in which to get involved individually or communally. Watch the following videos to get a basic understanding of these organizations.

AMMPARO - The ELCA's Migration Strategy to Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities.

The AMMPARO Strategy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yMar0aWQXGk&list=PLNDmVwhz-M36BaFeGnOXWzg7BwIymAv7v&index=6>

The Guardian Angels

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PeWX8KlsB7E&list=PLNDmVwhz-M36BaFeGnOXWzg7BwIymAv7v&index=8>

ELCA Advocacy -ELCA advocacy works for change in public policy based on the experience of Lutheran ministries, programs and projects around the world and in communities across the United States.

ELCA Advocacy - Set Free to do Justice

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5bXIUXVixg>

Lutheran World Relief - Created in 1945 this organization has been involved in transformational global development by breaking the cycle of poverty so all of God's children can thrive.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=12Acy-U8WXQ>

You can find more information on these outreach ministries and more on the ELCA Website.

Follow up questions:

1. How many of these ministries are you already familiar with? What was new?
2. How is your congregation already involved in communal diakonia? How are you already serving your neighbor?

Close with Prayer

4a-Affirmation of Baptism Liturgy

Leader:

Our baptism sets us out on a lifelong journey that is characterized by our relationship to God, our relationship to our faith community, our relationships with various parts of our neighborhood and community, and our relationship to the wider world. The baptismal covenant describes this lifelong journey with God.

Group:

Our baptism is a significant part of our faith journey as we come from the baptismal waters to live a new life as children of God. Marked with the cross of Christ and sealed by the Spirit, we received a new identity as followers of Jesus, and the story of Jesus became our story.

Leader:

Do you believe in God the Father?

Group:

I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth

Leader:

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the son of God?

Group:

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Leader:

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

Group:

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Leader:

You have made a public profession of your faith. Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism: to live among God's faithful people, to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper, to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, to serve all people, following the example of Jesus, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth?

Group:

We do and we ask God to help and guide us.

Leader:

Let us pray...

Group:

Help us to live out our baptismal covenant, to love God and love our neighbor, to proclaim the Good news of your son, Jesus Christ and to serve all people. We pray that you use us to bring about peace and justice in all the earth. Amen.

4b-Digging Deeper - The Affirmation of Baptism

- 1. Look at each promise that is made at the Rite of Confirmation, also known as the Affirmation of Baptism. How can these promises be fulfilled as an individual? Write a number one before these answers.*
- 2. How can these promises be fulfilled together as the body of Christ? Write a number 2 before these answers.*

Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism
to live among God's faithful people,

to hear the word of God

to share in the Lord's supper,

to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed,

to serve all people, following the example of Jesus,

and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth?

3. *Where are there gaps? What more can be done individually or communally?*

Lesson 5: Diakonia and Systemic Racism

Objective: Learners will be able to construct an argument for confronting systemic racism as a ministry of diakonia

Background

The Evangelical Lutheran Church is the “whitest” mainline denomination in the United States. Our church does not reflect the demographics of our country with the ELCA boasting 96% White members and 4% people of color. In 2018, the United States reported its demographics to be 69.5% White and 30.5% people of color. It is no surprise since our roots are mainly Dutch, German and Swedish. In 1649, First Lutheran Church was founded in Albany, New York and is the oldest of the ELCA Congregations. This event happened after the first African slaves arrived in Jamestown in 1619 and before New York recognized the legality of slavery. The beginnings of the American Lutheran church were stepped in racial injustice and white supremacy. During the 1860s, Norwegian Lutherans in Illinois debated the pros and cons of slavery which means slavery wasn’t seen by all as contrary to the Gospel.¹³⁰

White Privilege occurs when the mere suggestion of being white triggers a range of emotional responses such as anger, fear, guilt and withdrawal from the stress inducing situation.¹³¹

Opening

- Hand out the Opening Litany on Racism and Diakonia (5a)
- Hand out the Racism Vocabulary Sheet and go over definitions with group (5b)

Digging Deeper

1. Being aware of White Privilege Hand out, complete and discuss the White Privilege Checklist-(5c)
 - a. What are you aware of that you were not before?
 - b. What does this say about systemic racism in our society?
2. Read the summary of the Social Statement “Freed in Christ, Race, Ethnicity and Culture”- found on the ELCA website
 - a. https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Freed_In_Christ_Race_Ethnicity_Culture_BriefSummary.pdf?_ga=2.144389621.1719910461.1608299426-2070066180.1597154134
 - i. Where do you find opportunities for diakonia as it pertains to racism?
 1. What can you do as a congregational body?
 2. What can you do as an individual?

Close with Prayer

¹³⁰ “ELCA Racial Justice Train the Trainer.” ELCA Anti-Racism Training. Lecture presented at the ELCA Anti-Racism Training, September 2018.

¹³¹ Robin J. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2018), 2.

5a-Racism and Diakonia Litany¹³²

L: The church must get involved in systemic racism because

P: **doing so is essential to our calling as Christians.**

L: The church must get involved because

P: **racism exists. Some of us are oppressors. Some of us are oppressed.**

L: The church must get involved because

P: **people are living in a state of oppression and denial that is contrary to God's work of saving grace.**

L: The church must get involved because

P: **we are called to lay a foundation of healing, reconciliation and transformation.**

L: The church must get involved because

P: **we are called to follow Jesus' example and address pain.**

L: The church must get involved because

P: **if any one part of the body of Christ suffers, we all suffer. Even when we do not recognize, admit or acknowledge our suffering and pain, it is there.**

L: The church must get involved because

P: **in order to understand itself and other members of the body of Christ.**

L: The church must get involved

P: **in order to educate and help eradicate systemic racism.**

L: The church must get involved

P: **to restate and redefine what it means to see Christ in one another.**

ALL: **The church must get involved because Jesus told us to love our neighbors and we recognize that all people are made in the image of Christ.**

¹³² adapted from Breaking the Bonds, Why Should the Church be Involved

5b-Racism Vocabulary

Prejudice

A preconceived belief, usually based on limited information.

Race

is a social construct, not biological. The term was created in the 1880's by Dr. Samuel Morton who wrote about biological differences between people of different ethnicities. This dangerous flawed belief helped to justify slavery, discrimination and genocide.

Racism

prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against a person or people on the basis of their membership in a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or marginalized.

Systemic racism

is a form of racism that is embedded as normal practice within society or an organization. It can lead to such issues as discrimination in criminal justice, employment, housing, health care, political power, and education, among other issues.

White People

People of European descent; the term "white" did not exist until 1681 when laws in the United States began to use this term. Laws in early America began to use this term which led to discrimination.

White Privilege

occurs when the mere suggestion of being white triggers a range of emotional responses such as anger, fear, guilt and withdrawal from the stress inducing situation.

White Supremacy

A historically based institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of peoples of color by white people for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power and privilege.

5c-White Privilege Checklist

Peggy McIntosh, Associate Director of the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, describes white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets, which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was “meant” to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, code books, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks (McIntosh, 1989)

The following are examples of ways white individuals have privilege because they are white. Please read the list and place a check next to the privileges that apply to you or that you have encountered. At the end, try to list at least two more ways you have privilege based on your race.

- ☐ 1. I can arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
- ☐ 2. I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
- ☐ 3. I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.
- ☐ 4. When I am told about our national heritage or about civilization, I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
- ☐ 5. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
- ☐ 6. I can go into a music shop and count on finding the music of my race represented, into a supermarket and find the food I grew up with, into a hairdresser's shop and find someone who can deal with my hair.
- ☐ 7. Whether I use checks, credit cards, or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial responsibility.
- ☐ 8. I am not made acutely aware that my shape, bearing, or body odor will be taken as a reflection on my race.
- ☐ 9. I can worry about racism without being seen as self-interested or self-seeking.
- ☐ 10. I can take a job or enroll in a college with an affirmative action policy without having my coworkers or peers assume I got it because of my race
- ☐ 11. I can be late to a meeting without having the lateness reflect on my race.
- ☐ 12. I can choose public accommodation without fearing that people of my race cannot get in or will be mistreated.
- ☐ 13. I am never asked to speak for all of the people of my racial group.
- ☐ 14. I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk with the person in charge I will be facing a person of my race.
- ☐ 15. If a traffic cop pulls me over or if the IRS audits my tax return, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my race.

___ 16. I can easily buy posters, postcards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys, and children's magazines featuring people of my race.

___ 17. I can choose a blemish cover or bandages in flesh color and have them more or less match my skin.

___ 18. I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.

___ 19. I can walk into a classroom and know I will not be the only member of my race

. ___ 20. I can enroll in a class at college and be sure that the majority of my professors will be of my race.¹³³

Racial privilege is only one form of privilege. What are other examples of privilege? (e.g., privilege based on gender, sexual orientation, class, and religion). Can you think of ways one might have privilege based on these factors? (e.g., that you do not have to worry about being verbally or physically harassed because of your sexual orientation; or you can be sure that your religious holiday will be acknowledged and represented in store displays, classroom discussions, etc.). Please list these forms of privilege

¹³³ Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege Checklist," eh counseling, accessed December 16, 2020, ehcounseling.com.

Lesson 6: Diakonia and the ELCA Social Statements and Social Messages

Objective: Learners will be able to articulate the views of the ELCA and social problems in the church and the world.

Opening Questions:

What are social statements?

They are policy documents about social issues and the understanding of how the church should respond to these issues

Can you list the social statements of the ELCA?

- Abortion (1991)
- Caring for creation (1993)
- Church in society (1991)
- The church and criminal justice (2013)
- The death penalty (1991)
- Economic life (1999)
- Education (2007)
- Genetics (2011)
- Health and health care (2003)
- Human sexuality (2009)
- Peace (1995)
- Race, ethnicity and culture (1993)
- Sexism (2019)¹³⁴

What is the difference between social statements and social messages?

Social messages are **topical documents** adopted by the ELCA Church Council to focus attention and action on **timely, pressing matters** of social concern to the church and society.

Can you list any of the 15 social messages of the ELCA?

- Government (2020)
- Human Rights(2017)
- Gender-based Violence (2015)
- Mental Illness (2012)
- People Living with Disabilities (2010)
- Terrorism (2004)
- Commercial Sexual Exploitation (2001)
- Suicide Prevention (1999)
- Immigration (1998)
- Sexuality: Common Convictions (1996)

¹³⁴ "Social Statements," The ELCA, 2020, <https://www.elca.org/socialstatements>.

- Community Violence (1994)
- End of Life Decisions (1992)
- Homelessness (1990)
- Israeli/Palestinian Conflict (1989)
- AIDS (1988)¹³⁵

Introduction

Watch the YouTube video on the ELCA Social Statements

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmLztZE0Z3I>

Digging Deeper

Choose a social statement and a social message to discuss.

Visit <https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Messages> for the list of social messages and <https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements> for a list of social statements

Closing Questions

1. How do these messages/statements inform our discipleship both individually and communally?
2. Are there other issues that are missing?
3. Does the church have a responsibility to educate on these statements and messages?
4. What if part of your congregation disagrees with a statement or message? How should this disagreement be handled?

Close with Prayer

¹³⁵ "Social Messages," ELCA.org, 2020, <https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Messages>.

Lesson 7: The Role of the Rostered Deacon

Objective: Learners will be able take a position on ways a deacon can be an asset to a congregation

Opening Question:

What is a deacon in the ELCA?

A **Deacon** is a minister of word and service; a minister who bridges church and world. (From the Greek – Diakonos which means service) This is a professional rostered office in the ELCA which requires a seminary degree, Clinical Pastoral Education and an internship. The ministry of the diaconate, that is of deacons also called ministers of Word and Service, is recognized by churches throughout history and around the world. The ELCA continues to seek to honor the significance of deacons serving at the intersection of church and world, bringing a sharper focus to the ways the church responds to the needs of the people.¹³⁶

History of Deacons or the Diaconate (a collective term of deacons)

Background

Until 2018, there were three forms of vocational diaconal ministry: the Deaconess, the Diaconal Minister and the Associate in Ministry. The church has created an order for affirming particular calls to serve in the interest of that divine mission. When the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) was formed in 1988, it established three rosters: pastors, deaconesses, and associates in ministry. In 1993, a roster of diaconal ministers was added, and the first were consecrated in 1995. These rostered leaders are called through the ELCA to serve congregations as well as through other officially called ministries. Some of each of the rosters of the ELCA are chaplains, therapists, musicians and cantors, seminary faculty and administrators, social workers and churchwide and synod leaders.¹³⁷

In 2018, at the churchwide assembly, the three expressions were placed into one roster, the roster of deacon.

¹³⁶ Carol Schickel, "What Is a Deacon?" Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2020, <http://www.elca.org/>.

¹³⁷ Carol Shickes, "What is a Deacon?"

The History of the Deaconess Community of the ELCA

Deaconesses are the oldest “professional” service ministers in the ELCA.
Watch the following you tube video on the history of the Deaconess Community

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9A2h887Oizo>

What is a Deacon?

This video was produced by the South Carolina Synod to educate the church about the roster of deacon.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tug0qx764_U

Follow up Questions:

What would be the benefit to calling a deacon to your congregation?

How would you explain the role of a deacon to another?

What would be the benefit of a pastor and deacon working together?

Close with Prayer

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