



The Five Gifts of Discipleship and Stewardship

As persons of faith, we are called to grow in faith, love and obedience to the will of God. As we are baptized, we take on a new life in Christ and are given 5 gifts of discipleship, 5 ways to practice our faith that guide us on our life-long faith journey. These five gifts of discipleship, also known as the Faith Practices of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are;

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

To strive for justice and peace in all the earth.

While there are many understandings of the word stewardship, one that connects well with faith practices focuses on our relationship with God, each other and what is entrusted to us. Perhaps the fullness of the connection can be expressed as how God's faithful people accompany each other to grow in relationship with Jesus Christ through the use of the varied gifts entrusted to us for God's work in the world.

Live Among God's Faithful People

Among the special gifts from God is Christian community. The Holy Spirit calls us and forms us into the Body of Christ; though many and diverse, yet one. Whether following Christ on our personal journey or as a community, we are thankful for the varied gifts entrusted to us for building up the body and doing God's work in the world. This includes modeling a life of grace, gratitude and generosity.

Hear the word of God and share in the Lord's Supper

As we hear God's word, we hear words of challenge and also words of encouragement. The words of challenge often lead us to reflect on how we can grow in our faith. The words of encouragement offer us hope when all seems hopeless. As we take the bread and wine during the Lord's Supper, we receive God's presence in our bodies and forgiveness of our sins as gifts. While we are broken human beings, hearing the word of God and sharing in the Lord's Supper provides us a peace and hope and joy that sustains us in using our gifts. As the bread becomes for us the Body of Christ, so we become the Body of Christ for God's purposes in the world.

Proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed

“When we think of the goodness of Jesus and all he has done for us, our soul cries out alleluia, thank God for saving us.” This is a paraphrase of a song, but it highlights that when we think of Jesus and all that Jesus has done for us, we do want to cry out because the love of Christ is **SO AMAZING!** Instead of crying out, we often decide to tell the story of Jesus and how the love of Jesus has melted us, molded us, filled us and used us. As servants of Christ and stewards of the mystery of the gospel, we share a living, daring confidence in God’s grace and invite others into the journey. We not only tell the story of Jesus in our own words, but also declare God’s work through our deeds of kindness and compassion.

Serve all people following the example of Jesus

If we follow the example of how Jesus served, then we have to reach out like Jesus did and help the “least of these”. We visit those in prison and we visit the sick. We provide resources for the homeless and hungry. We provide financial support to those who have experienced disasters. We are set free by the gospel to serve our neighbors through the generous sharing of our time, talent and resources. We give our money to support the ministries of the church and direct it where it can be most helpful. As we give of ourselves, we often discover meaning in life, and encounter Christ in others.

Strive for justice and peace in all the earth

We live in a broken world in which we face war, poverty, hatred, prejudice and other societal challenges. God’s desire for us is for all to have an abundant life, but that is not the reality in today’s world. Scripture presents care of creation and its diversity as fundamental to our human vocation and mission . Our Christian ethics invite us to acknowledge the relationship between ecological conditions and human justice. As members of the Body of Christ, we strive through our individual efforts and the ministries of our faith communities to ease the suffering in the world. We pray that all creation will be made new, and that through the Holy Spirit we will be both resilient and transformed in our efforts toward peace. Called to love all humanity, we challenge systems that perpetuate poverty, injustice and degradation of God’s creation. We are a people who believe Jesus is God’s “YES” to us and our lives can be “YES” to others.

We are called to make disciples of all nations as we do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God. Furthermore, it is required of stewards to be trustworthy as we join together to restore the goodness of God’s creation and experience wholeness in our relationship with God, one another and the entire creation.

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March, 2016