
Equipping Pastors Study Guide

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Background and process

This discussion guide is offered to help you lead others in your congregation through an important conversation about the nature and the purpose of the church. It is designed for your use in a wide variety of congregational settings and provides a forum for addressing the church's identity and work in a time of great change.

The interim report on the Equipping Pastors conversations is printed separately so that it can be distributed to those who will be participating in the conversation. Depending on how your group works and the amount of time you will have in each session, you may ask participants to read the designated section of the report before you gather, or you may have participants read it aloud during your time together.

As you begin this conversation, be gentle with yourself. The purpose is not to race through the report as quickly as possible in order to get on to the next thing on the agenda; the purpose is to talk, to listen, and to wait on God's still, small voice. You might not even need to talk about all items in the report. Depending on your context, you might pick the sections that are most appropriate for your current circumstances, and hold the other topics for another time. You probably will not want or need to ask all of the questions provided; in fact, you may want to use questions that are tailored to your particular context. You may find it helpful to split one or more of the topics into multiple times for discussion. It may also ***wait on God's still, small voice*** be wise to open a conversation, to let it 'simmer' between meetings, allowing time for prayer and contemplation, and then to continue the conversation at a later date.

Note that this study guide does *not* follow the order of the report, nor does it cover the whole of the report. The Equipping Pastors interim report was written in an order that best reflected the content of the eleven conversations. To facilitate this conversation with a lay audience, though, it seems best to deal first with an introduction to ministry in daily life, then with our confusion over what it is, and then with the role of pastors. You may want to reorder the conversation to fit your own particular context or needs.

The reading and consideration of Bible passages is a prominent feature in ***led by the scriptures*** the discussion of the report. It is suggested that copies of the Bible be made available to each participant—or even better, that participants be asked to bring their own Bible

to each session. After a passage is read, encourage participants to keep their Bibles open to that passage, and to look back at it as the discussion progresses. Pastors are urged to refrain from being the expert in the interpretation and explanation of the scripture passages; rather seek to empower and support the laity as they encounter the narratives in their own way.

prayer and silence Prayer, silence and hymnody are also prominent features in each session. In keeping with the topic, it is suggested that pastors find gentle and loving ways to empower the laity to lead and participate in the prayers. Don't rush the periods of silence. Let participants have time to settle into silence so that all of the conversation that precedes can settle in.

Note: This study guide was initially written for a pre-dominantly Lutheran audience. Users from other traditions are encouraged to make adaptations as needed. "ELW" refers to the hymnal, Evangelical Lutheran Worship.

This discussion guide is offered with the firm conviction that purpose will come to those congregations that are open to God's will. This is work that needs to be bathed in prayer and grounded in scripture. It is a journey that has to be undertaken by the people who are directly involved in the ministry. This discussion guide is offered with the awareness that the path to renewal is different for each congregation; it requires an understanding of each congregation's unique gifts **an ongoing conversation** and setting. And this guide is offered with the understanding that no congregation will ever fully achieve renewal; we seek *ongoing* conversion, always becoming what God calls us to be. "Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is." (1 John 3:2)

Goals

Those who engage in these conversations will:

1. Create a safe environment within which to uncover and unleash a fuller understanding of the ministry of all the baptized.
2. Re-engage ancient practices of the church, including prayer, study of scripture and discernment—all in the context of community.
3. Have an opportunity to give voice to their hopes for their ministry in daily life and for their congregation.
4. Have a clearer vision of their congregation's unique identity within Christ's church and its calling in the world.
5. Identify the most important actions that will lead toward ongoing conversion and renewed participation in God's mission in the world.

Methodology

Each section of this discussion guide follows this structure:

- Opening with the reading of scripture related to the particular topic.
- Reading or reviewing one section of the report.
- Returning to scripture passages related to the topic.
- Discussing questions related to how the topic might be applicable to the congregation's ministry.
- Listening for God: Returning to scripture again, followed by prayer, silence, and the singing of a hymn. Sharing any insights or observations that participants may have had during the session. Discussing possible actions that might be taken to respond to the topic.

You may want to designate someone to take notes during your conversations, recording especially those insights and observations that are pertinent to your congregation's ministry, as well as any potential actions that you discuss as a result of your conversations. In keeping with the interim nature of the report, we hope that you will tell us about questions, insights, or new initiatives that come out of your conversations. You might also want to consider publishing a readers' digest version of your conversations in your congregation's newsletter or on your website (either as the conversation unfolds or at the end of the process) to encourage the rest of your members to be a part of this discovery process.

1 | Introducing the conversation

Open by having a participant read 1 Corinthians 12:20–27 aloud.

After the reading, simply let the passage speak for itself as it will be considered again later in the session. Offer a prayer asking God to open us to our call to be in a caring and serving relationship with the world around us.

Review with the participants their understanding of ministry in daily life. Arrange for space on a chalkboard, white board or flip chart on which you have room to write a phrase and then record participants' responses. Write the following phrases on the board *one at a time* and ask participants to name what comes to mind when they hear each phrase:

Ministry

Ministry of the laity

Ministry of all the baptized

The priesthood of all believers

Vocation

Ministry in daily life

Feel free to add other phrases that are synonymous. As you work through the phrases, do not attempt to interpret, correct, or teach. Simply get the people to name what comes to mind when they hear each phrase. If they are confused or unsure, note that. If they have questions, list them and probe further to ensure that the questions are fully expressed, but refrain from answering. At this point the leader should not be the expert in the room; you are simply trying to elicit from the participants what they understand and what their questions are.

When you have finished with each phrase, look back at your notes for themes and patterns. Where does confusion or uncertainty show? Where is clarity apparent? Is there consensus? Again, do not attempt to correct or teach; just gather the information and note the patterns.

Once you have gathered the first impressions of the participants, have someone read 1 Peter 4:2–3, 8–11 aloud.

Questions for consideration...

Have participants discuss some or all of the following questions, or use questions that come to mind:

- Ask first what they noticed about the opening scripture passage, what was a new insight, or what spoke to them. Encourage the participants to wrestle with the meaning of the passage. What does the passage say about ministry?
- What did the opening exercise reveal about our assumptions about ‘ministry’? Who does ministry? Where does ministry take place?
- If the participants focus ministry in terms of what pastors do or what happens in the church, look at the passage from 1 Peter in terms of where the ministry described there is taking place. (While you want to raise the question of ministry in daily life, don’t spend too much time here as this is the focus of the next session.)

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- Read this paragraph out loud (or say it in your own words):

Ministry happens in the farm field, where food is grown so that people might be fed. Ministry happens in classrooms, where children and adults receive education necessary for their welfare and for the sake of the world. Ministry happens when a parent changes a diaper, clothes and feeds, shelters and raises their child. Ministry happens when an adult child cares for their aging parent. Ministry happens in the workplace where products are produced, where countless decisions are made, where people and all creation are protected and served.

(page 13 of the Equipping Pastors report)

Explore their reactions to the paragraph. How is it in keeping with their initial assumptions? How is it different? Once again, does the opening scripture passage shed any light on ministry (beyond that which pastors do)?

Listening for God

Before having the following passage read aloud, tell the participants that they will spend a few minutes in silent prayer and contemplation after the reading, listening for God's voice around one central question: *Where and how does God call me to ministry, in the church and in my daily life?*

Have Romans 12:4–8 read aloud, followed by silence.

After the silence, have participants share any insights that came to them. Offer a prayer based on the passage. After the prayer, sing *Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service* (ELW 712) or a similar hymn.

One final question: Based on everything that has been said, are there any actions that we want to undertake?

In preparation for the next session, have participants read the Introduction (pp. 1–2) and the section “Confusion about ministry in daily life” (pp. 8–10).

2 | Confusion about ministry in daily life

Open the discussion by having a participant read I Peter 2:9–17 aloud.

After the reading, simply let the passage speak for itself as it will be considered later in the session. Offer a prayer that invites God to be present in the discussion, as we seek to understand our call to ministry.

Review (or read aloud) the section of the report “Confusion about ministry in daily life.” Invite the participants to speak to the points that they found most helpful or challenging, and allow them to express any questions they may have. Read aloud the quote from Bill Diehl in the box on page 10 of the report, and then explore the validity of his observation with the participants.

While Luther did not use the phrase “priesthood of all believers,” he addresses the topic in *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* where he dismisses the view of his time that Christians were divided into “spiritual” and “temporal” classes:

That the pope or bishop anoints, makes tonsures, ordains, consecrates, or dresses differently from the laity, may make a hypocrite or an idolatrous oil-painted icon, but it in no way makes a Christian or spiritual human being. In fact, we are all consecrated priests through baptism, as St. Peter in 1 Peter 2 says, “You are a royal priesthood and a priestly kingdom,” and Revelation, “Through your blood you have made us into priests and kings.”

At this point you may want to offer a brief recap of the social, political and religious context of the Reformation, and of Luther’s theory of two kingdoms. Then review the opening scripture reading in light of the priesthood of all believers.

Before moving to the questions, have Matthew 25:31–40 read aloud.

Questions for consideration...

Have participants discuss some or all of the following questions, or use questions that come to mind that more fully capture how the report and the scripture passages speak to your congregation’s context:

- What does the passage from 1 Peter say about the division between the temporal and the spiritual? What does the passage say about ‘ministry’ or ‘vocation’?
- When you hear the phrase, “ministry in daily life” (or any of the synonyms) what comes to mind? How would you describe your ministry in daily life?
- In the order of Affirmation of Baptism (ELW, p. 237), those making affirmation are asked, “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 Christ, and to strive for justice and peace in all the world?" Which of these are internal activities? Which are external? Which might be both? Which are we most familiar and comfortable with? In what ways do participants see themselves "striving for justice and peace in all the world"? How does this list compare to the understanding that ministry in daily life is merely a matter of being nice, moral or kind?

- Read the story, "Adventures with Dad" (see Appendix 1). Ask participants to identify the various examples of ministry in daily life that are described in the story.
- In the passage from Matthew 25, when did the 'righteous sheep' realize that they were doing ministry? What does that have to say about ministry in daily life? What does this passage have to say about the church's role in naming, supporting and empowering ministry in daily life?

Listening for God

Read Micah 6:6–8 aloud, and then spend a several minutes in silent prayer and contemplation, listening for God's voice around one question: *How do I serve all people following the example of Jesus Christ, and strive for justice and peace in all the world?*

After the silence, sing *To Be Your Presence* (ELW 546) or a similar hymn. Then share insights and observations with one another. At some point offer a prayer based on this reflection time. Finally, ask, "Based on everything that has been said, are there any actions that we want to undertake?"

In preparation for the next session, have participants read the section "Intensely interested yet unsure what to do" (pp. 3–4).

3 | Intensely interested yet unsure what to do

Open the discussion by having someone read Ephesians 4:4–7, 11–13 aloud.

After the reading, simply let the passage speak for itself as it will be directly considered later in the session. Offer a prayer asking God to open us to new and broader understandings of ministry, who does it, and where it takes place.

Review (or read aloud) the first section of the report, "Intensely interested yet unsure what to do." Invite participants speak to the points that they found

most helpful or challenging, and allow them to express any questions they may have. Don't try to answer questions at this point, rather note them and promise to explore them later in the session.

Offer a brief summary of Luther's work on the priesthood of all believers. In addition to noting that it was one of the central and best known products of the Reformation, note that this concept arose in response to Luther's refutation of the pope, priests and the cloistered life as being a better or more holy way of life. Prior to the Reformation, the best, highest and most faithful way to serve God was to be a monk or a priest. In addition, people paid the priest to perform masses on their behalf. The priesthood of all believers was a bold stance that broke from the common understanding of a spiritual aristocracy or hierarchy within Christianity—what we would call paid professionals in matters of faith. Luther said that no vocation stands over and above the rest. No vocation is more sacred or better than any other. God calls all believers, without exception, to be priests in their own place—from the dockworker to the doctor, from the messenger to the manager, from the educator to the executive. No vocation is too lowly to be the means through which God works.

By promoting the priesthood of all believers, though, Luther did not say that pastors are obsolete, but rather that they were set aside to perform a particular task on behalf of the community of faith. Article 5 of the Augsburg Confession says, "God instituted the office of preaching, giving the gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit who produces faith, where and when he wills, in those who hear the gospel."

Once the text of the report is fully encountered, have someone read the opening scripture passage aloud once again.

Questions for consideration...

- Ask first what they noticed about the passage, what was a new insight, or what spoke to them. Encourage the participants to wrestle with the meaning of the passage. Is the passage directed at an internal church activity or to an external activity? If no one raises the point, note that "both" could be a valid answer to the question. Discuss the implications of 'both'. Why do we offer internal activities? What is the "so that" of our congregation's worship, education, fellowship and so forth?
- What in the report was surprising to the participants? What offered new insights? In the boxed quote on page 3, Norma Cook Everist and Craig Nes-san state that the power of the priesthood of all believers has not been fully

unleashed. Is that true? What clues do participants have about the cause of this?

- The report indicates that there is a divide between what pastors feel they should be doing and what members feel pastors should be doing. Make a list of the common assumptions members have about what the pastor does or should do. Compare that to the list in the official letter of call (see Appendix 3; note especially the last two items in the first paragraph). Pastors indicate that they should be about the work of equipping members for ministry in daily life. Do the members of your congregation want this, or are they happy with the way things have been in the past? How might your congregation change if pastors did what they feel called to do?
- On page 4 the report indicates that the role of the pastor is in transition “from Christendom assumptions to something different, new, and undefined.” (If you need help defining ‘Christendom assumptions’ see the section of the 2007 Needs Assessment Report that deals with that topic, available at www.renewingchurch.org > Worth Sharing > CFR Resources.) In what ways are members aware of this shift? How does this transition affect the life and ministry of your congregation?
- Encourage the group to deal with any questions that came up earlier in the session. As much as is possible, refrain from being the expert in the room; instead seek to empower the participants to wrestle with the questions.

Listening for God

Have participants turn to Acts 6 in their Bibles and ask someone read verses 1–6 aloud.

Ask the participants to rewrite this passage to reflect this conversation and the realities in your congregation (Instead of “It is not right that we should wait tables,” what might people want to change in the role of their leaders?) Offer a prayer based the rewritten passage. When the prayer is concluded, spend a couple minutes in silent prayer and contemplation, listening for God’s voice.

Conclude the prayer and contemplation by singing *We Are All One in Mission* (ELW 576) or a similar hymn. Then share insights and observations with one another. Based on everything that has been said, are there any actions that we want to undertake?

In preparation for the next session, have participants read the section “Awareness of systemic blocks” (pp. 4–8).

4 | Awareness of systemic blocks

Before beginning this session, ask one or more people to listen for and record topics or issues in this conversation that might be lifted up in prayers of confession, intercession, supplication and praise. These will be used at the end of the session.

Open the discussion by having someone read 1 Timothy 4:11–16 aloud. (It might be helpful to preface the reading with a brief introduction to the meaning and purpose of the letters to Timothy.)

After the reading, simply let the passage speak for itself. It will be considered again later in the session. Offer a prayer asking God to help us see our congregation's life and work with new eyes.

Review (or read aloud) the second section of the report, "Awareness of systemic blocks." Encourage participants to speak to the points that they found most helpful or challenging, and allow them to express any questions they may have.

In connection with the first section, "It takes ordination to be a minister," the constitution of the ELCA is helpful. It defines ministry in terms of the priesthood of all the baptized: "This church affirms the universal priesthood of all its baptized members. In its function and its structure this church commits itself to the equipping and supporting of all its members for their ministries in the world and in this church. It is within this context of ministry that this church calls some of its baptized for specific ministries in this church" (ELCA Constitution 7.11). Pay particular attention to the second sentence of the definition (In its function and structure...) where it speaks about those who are equipped for ministry. Note the order in which the constitution lists the places in which ministry occurs ("in the world" vs. "in this church").

Once the text of the report is fully encountered, have a participant read 1 Peter 5:1–4 aloud.

Questions for consideration...

Have participants discuss some or all of the following questions, or use questions that come to mind that more fully capture how the report and the scripture passages speak to your particular context:

- In what ways are pastors and other rostered church leaders different from members? What do they share in common? What do the passages from

1 Timothy and 1 Peter have to say about the distinctive role of the pastor? Provide a copy of a pastor's Letter of Call (see Appendix 3), review the duties and responsibilities listed, and compare those to the charges given to all the baptized in the Affirmation of Baptism rite (ELW p. 237) If you would like to pursue this question further, see the 1982 World Council of Churches report, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* for excellent commentary on the ministry that belongs to all the baptized and ordained members. (See Appendix 2.)

- In what ways do members of the congregation assume that “the pastor does ministry that I benefit from”? In what ways does the pastor feel it is important to do ministry on behalf of others? What keeps pastors from being equipping pastors?
- If you have not done so already, engage the group in a conversation about the difference between being called and being hired, between a ‘call’ and a job. John 10:11-15 might be a good introduction to the conversation.
- If your congregation uses a Time and Talent sheet (or something similar) distribute copies and do an audit of the opportunities listed. Note which items are connected to internal congregational activities and which are connected to the daily lives of members. (Note: pay particular attention to items like “Serve a meal at the homeless shelter.” While such ministries often occur outside of the congregation’s building, they are usually a way to serve through the congregation. Are items like these really ‘daily life’ ministries?)
- Develop a “So that...” list. On a chalkboard, white board or flip chart, list a function of the congregation followed by “so that” and have participants finish the statement. For example, “We have Sunday school classes so that...” “We have a building so that...” After you have done several, go back and look for patterns. How many of the “so that” statements have to do with maintaining the institution? How many have to do with external or missional purposes?
- Read the boxed quote from Chris Scharen on page 7 of the report. Engage participants in a conversation about his claim. Ask participants to name alternatives to this segmentation of our lives.

Listening for God

Read 2 Timothy 4:1–5 aloud, and then offer the prayers of confession, intercession, supplication and praise that the note takers have recorded as you talk-

ed. When the prayers are concluded, spend a couple minutes in silent prayer and contemplation, listening for God’s voice.

After prayer and contemplation, sing *The Church of Christ, in Every Age* (ELW 729) or a similar hymn. Then share insights and observations with one another. Based on everything that has been said, are there any actions that we want to undertake?

In preparation for the next session, have participants read the section “Theological grounding needed” (pp. 12–13).

5 | Theological grounding needed

Open the discussion by having a participant read Genesis 12:1–3 aloud. [In preparation for this session, it would be helpful for the leader to review similar passages in Genesis 18:17; 22:11–18; 26:1–5; 28:10–15.]

After the reading, simply let the passage speak for itself as it will be considered later in the session. Offer a prayer asking God to be present and to bring us to deeper insight into the nature and purpose of the church.

Review (or read aloud) the section of the report entitled “Theological grounding needed.” Encourage participants to speak to the points that they found most helpful or challenging, and allow them to express any questions they may have. Once the text of the report is fully encountered, have a participant read Deuteronomy 6:4–9 aloud. Follow that reading with the reading of Matthew 22:36–40.

Questions for consideration...

Have participants discuss some or all of the following questions, or use questions that come to mind that more fully capture how the report and the scripture passages speak to your congregation’s context:

- The opening passage from Genesis (and the similar passages scattered through the rest of Genesis) makes it clear that God is not only concerned for the “chosen people,” but for the welfare (blessing) of the world. Have the participants review how that turned out. [In short, the rest of the Old Testament shows that the people of Israel turned inward.]
- The passage from Deuteronomy 6 (the Shema) makes it clear that we are to love God with all our heart, soul, and might. Have participants list the aspects of your congregation’s life together that seek to do that. When they

have done that, review Matthew 22:36–40. Jesus repeats the Shema, but then he adds something to it. Why do you suppose Jesus felt it necessary to add the second commandment “which is like the first”?

- As time allows, have participants answer the questions on page 12 of the report. If your group is large enough, have participants form teams of two or three, have each team consider a different question, then report back to the whole group.
- What difference does all of this make in the life and activities of your community of faith? If the nature and the purpose of the people of God (the church) is to be in mission to the world, what does that mean for what we do and how we do it as a congregation?

Listening for God

Read Exodus 19:1–6 aloud, and offer a prayer based the passage. When the prayer is concluded, spend a couple minutes in silent prayer and contemplation, listening for God’s voice.

After prayer and contemplation, sing *The Lord Now Sends Us Forth* (ELW 538) or a similar hymn. Then share insights and observations with one another. Based on everything that has been said, are there any actions that we want to undertake?

In preparation for the next session, have participants read the section “God is at work, ministry is happening” (pp. 13–14).

6 | God is at work, ministry is happening

Open the discussion by having a participant read Isaiah 58:6–9 aloud.

At this point, simply let the passage speak for itself as it will be considered later in the session. Offer a prayer asking God to open our hearts and minds to God’s activity in the world, and our baptismal call to join in God’s work.

Review (or read aloud) the section of the report entitled “God is at work, ministry is happening.” Let participants speak to the points that they found most helpful or challenging, and allow them to express any questions they may have. Once the text of the report is fully encountered, have a participant read Joshua 1:9 aloud.

Questions for consideration...

Have participants discuss some or all of the following questions, or use questions that come to mind that more fully capture how the report and the scripture passages speak to your congregation's context:

- If your group is large enough, have participants form teams of two or three, then have each team name places and people in which God is at work in their lives. Have them name ways in which they see themselves as being called to join God's work in those places and people. When they are finished, have the small groups report what was said to the large group.
- In the section on testimony (pp. 16–17) the opening paragraph asks, "Is the disconnect between what we do at church and what people do in the world due to the fact that people are not hearing the stories of ministry from others?" The first question (above) was an exercise in doing just that. The section on testimony carries that work forward. If you have time, you might explore that section with the group, or have them read it at home.
- Either in small groups or in the total group, invite participants to discuss how your congregation names, supports or encourages ministry in the world in the daily lives of your members. Look through recent bulletins, newsletters and web pages published by your congregation. How many of the articles and/or activities name, support and encourage ministry in the world? How might you tell the stories of people at work, joining God, in the world?
- Some of the pastors in the Equipping Pastors conversations were intent on naming and claiming the reality that God is at work, that ministry is happening in the lives of members. How much are people in your congregation aware of this? Can they name God's activity? Do they feel comfortable using that kind of language? If not, what might we do about that?

Listening for God

Read Psalm 139:7–12 aloud, and have someone offer a prayer based the passage. When the prayer is concluded, spend a couple minutes in silent prayer and contemplation, listening for God's voice.

After prayer and contemplation, sing stanzas 4 and 5 of *God, When Human Bonds Are Broken* (ELW 603). Then share insights and observations with one another. Based on everything that has been said, are there any actions that we want to undertake?

In preparation for the next session, have participants read the section “What pastors can do” (pp. 14–16).

7 | What pastors can do

Open the discussion by having a participant read 2 Timothy 4:1–5 aloud.

After the reading, simply let the passage speak for itself as it will be considered later in the session. Offer a prayer asking God to be present in our time together and to open us to new possibilities for strengthening the ministry given to all God’s people.

Review (or read aloud) the section of the report entitled “What pastors can do.” Let participants speak to the points that they found most helpful or challenging, and allow them to express any questions they may have. At this point in your group’s ongoing conversation, there should have been adequate time to explore a fuller understanding of ministry in daily life, and there should now be a better grasp of your congregation’s past efforts (or lack of) to support it. This session turns to the original intent of the Equipping Pastors Conversations: How might we describe, empower and support pastors who see their calling in terms of equipping members for ministry in their everyday lives?

Once the text of the report is fully encountered, have a participant read 1 Timothy 1:15–17 aloud.

Questions for consideration...

Have participants discuss some or all of the following questions, or use questions that come to mind that more fully capture how the report and the scripture passages speak to your congregation’s context:

- Conduct a survey of attitudes about ministry in daily life. Begin with the pastor: how central is this to what your pastor feels called to be and do? If you asked members about ministry in daily life how central would it be in their understanding of an “active church member”? One of the marks of renewal promoted by the Center for Renewal is “Pastors will be as adept at equipping members for ministry as they are at providing ministry for others.” How receptive would members be to a pastor who endeavored to do this?
- Most members of congregations choose what parts of congregational life to participate in; in most cases, members are involved in 1 to 4 hours of

“church life” per week. On the other hand, most pastors ‘live’ the church, working at congregational ministries for more than 40 hours per week, which leaves little time for activities that are not related to the congregation. What does this say about a pastor’s ability to be an “example to those who would come to believe in God” (1 Peter 1:16)? Are there any changes in your pastor’s activities or job description that might be considered so that he or she is better connected to life outside the congregation? How would you explain such changes to your congregation?

- How might you help your pastor experience and understand the ministries members are doing in the world? How might your pastor attend to and name the ministry members are already doing? How might your pastor empower members to tell their stories of ministry to one another? At the top of page 16 there are reports of resistance to such efforts; how would that resistance play out in your congregation? In your council and committee meetings?
- How would the work of a pastor who sees his or her job principally in terms of preparing and empowering people for ministry in their everyday lives be different from what most pastors do now? Read the boxed quote from Stevens and Collins on p. 15. What might the pastor do to foster the congregation as a system that equips the saints?

Listening for God

Read 2 Timothy 4:6–8 passage aloud (which is a continuation of the opening reading), and offer a prayer based the passage. When the prayer is concluded, spend a couple minutes in silent prayer and contemplation, listening for God’s voice, especially in terms of what God might be calling your pastor to be and do.

After prayer and contemplation, sing *God is Here!* (ELW 526) or a similar hymn. Then share insights and observations with one another. Based on everything that has been said, are there any actions that we want to undertake?

Note: The section on testimony (pp. 16–17) is not covered in this study guide. In a large way, the section of testimony is an extension of this session; it is one of the ways that pastors can foster a community that names, supports and empowers ministry in daily life. You may want to make reference to it during this session, or schedule a session to deal with testimony by itself.

8 | The way forward

Depending on your setting, it might be helpful to schedule one final session to look back over the scope of the conversation. Make sure to review your notes for the insights, observations and the possible actions that you have discussed during the sessions. Look back at the scripture readings or hymns that were most helpful or challenging. Provide an opportunity to deal with any unanswered or lingering questions. Your group (or an appointed person or subgroup) may want to write your own report of findings and share them with the rest of the congregation. (If you do, please share that with me!)

Once you have finished reviewing the conversation that you have had during these sessions, spend time in prayerful discernment regarding the actions that you feel are most important to undertake. Which of the possible actions that you discussed at the end of each section do you feel most called to address now? Which could wait for later? You may want to write down action steps that participants will undertake personally or that you want to pursue as a group or in the congregation at large. Perhaps it would be helpful to repeat these conversations (or parts of it) with other groups in the congregation. You may want to engage the rest of the congregation in conversation about any action steps that include people from outside your group.

Appendix 1 | Adventures with Dad

I took my 84-year-old father back to the eye surgeon today. Because his eye-lashes were growing inward and scratching his right eye, he had surgery in order to lift the lid. Unfortunately, the first surgeon lifted it too much and the gap went undetected for months. A large ulcer developed on his cornea due to exposure to air, and vision in his “good” eye was reduced from 20/20 to 200/20—almost blind. (His left eye had been damaged earlier in cataract surgery.)

Needless to say, we did not return to the first surgeon, but found a new one. We waited three hours to see this specialist who quickly diagnosed the problem. Because of the severity of the condition, he immediately fit us into his packed surgery schedule the next day—the last one of the year before Christmas holidays. This reparative procedure involved taking skin from behind his ear and grafting it to his eyelid. It also required another long healing process.

Today the stitches would come out. The patch stitched to his skin, which pressed down on the graft to help it heal correctly, would be released.

Instead of waiting for three hours, we were in and out in one. Plus, Dr. Callahan spent concentrated time with us as he worked on and tested Dad’s eyes. When he released the last stitch and asked him to open his eye, the first thing out of Dad’s mouth was, “Marjean, you look pretty in that blue sweater!” I had been with him for several hours by that point, but with the patch in place, he couldn’t see clearly. With the stitches out, it was gratifying for him to see me across the examining room. And to receive the warm compliment.

Dad was talkative with the nurse and the doctor. He complimented the nurse as she clipped the first stitches, “You’re doing a good job. I can’t feel a thing.” He told Dr. Callahan of his amazement at the professionalism and the precision of the operating room experience, during which he was awake and aware. The greatest relief came, however, when the doctor shined a light in his “hurt” eye and declared the ulcerated cornea completely healed. We said a loud “hallelujah” in celebration! I learned later that Dr. Callahan was known for “fixing the problems other doctors caused.” It was certainly true in our case.

Heading to the parking deck, Dad helped a woman board the elevator who walked with a cane. Driving home, he told me about the patient and loving attention he received from mom as she doctored his eye for two weeks. Grateful for her help, he knew he couldn’t perform the required cleaning and application of medicines on his own.

Walking into the retirement home, a couple standing by the mailroom greeted my dad with excitement. “Where is your patch? Oh, it’s nice to see your eyes again! That does lift one’s spirit, doesn’t it?” He spoke of the concern from everyone in the complex. “When you wear an eye patch, you certainly get sympathy.” I reminded him that he would be doing the same thing for another resident if they were the one with troubles. He nodded in agreement, saying, “I guess so.”

I explained the few instructions from the doctor to Mom, the attending nurse. With her own eyes open in anticipation; she asked, “Can you see me now?” Excited over the outcome, she was also grateful to stay at home while I provided chauffeur duties to the downtown appointment. She thanked me for taking him as well as for packing up their Christmas decorations, which I did quickly before leaving.

Parking at Home Depot a few minutes later, I noticed Dad’s tobacco pouch and pipe on my front seat. I finished my shopping and took it back to his door. Dad said apologetically, “That was thoughtful of you to bring it back, and thoughtless of me to leave it in the car.”

The thought struck me as I drove off, “My father is a gentleman.” And, I realized, more positive than he’s been in a long time.

It was obvious we were both seeing better.

Marjean Brooks

Appendix 2 | Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry

Excerpts from *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* that are helpful in the conversation on ministry, ministry of all the baptized, and ordained ministry include:

The Spirit calls people to faith, sanctifies them through many gifts, gives them strength to witness to the Gospel, and empowers them to serve in hope and love. (Ministry, I, 3)

The Holy Spirit bestows on the community diverse and complementary gifts. These are for the common good of the whole people and are manifested in acts of service within the community and to the world. They may be gifts of communicating the Gospel in word and deed, gifts of healing, gifts of praying, gifts of teaching and learning, gifts of serving, gifts of guiding and following, gifts of inspiration and vision. All members are called to discover, with the help of the community, the gifts they have received and to use them for the building up of the Church and for the service of the world to which the Church is sent. (Ministry, I, 5)

The word ministry in its broadest sense denotes the service to which the whole people of God is called, whether as individuals, as a local community, or as the universal Church. (Ministry, II, 7, b)

The term ordained ministry refers to persons who have received a charism and whom the church appoints for service by ordination through the invocation of the Spirit and the laying on of hands. (Ministry, II, 7, c)

All members of the believing community, ordained and lay, are interrelated. On the one hand, the community needs ordained ministers. Their presence reminds the community of the divine initiative, and of the dependence of the Church on Jesus Christ, who is the source of its mission and the foundation of its unity. They serve to build up the community in Christ and to strengthen its witness. In them the Church seeks an example of holiness and loving concern. On the other hand, the ordained ministry has no existence apart from the community. Ordained ministers can fulfill their calling only in and for the community. They cannot dispense with the recognition, the support and the encouragement of the community. (Ministry, II, 12)

The New Testament never uses the term “priesthood” or “priest” (*hierous*) to designate the ordained ministry or the ordained minister. In the New Testament, the term is reserved, on the one hand, for the unique priesthood of Jesus Christ and, on the other hand, for the royal and prophetic priesthood of all bap-

tized. (Ministry, II, 17, commentary)

The whole report can be read (or downloaded as a PDF) at <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/faith-and-order-commission/i-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/baptism-eucharist-and-ministry-faith-and-order-paper-no-111-the-lima-text.html>. Instead of typing this complicated address into a browser, you can Google “Baptism Eucharist Ministry” and the report should be the first result (look for the www.oikoumene.org address). *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* is also available in printed form.

Appendix 3 | Letter of Call to an ordained minister of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

We call you to exercise among us the ministry of Word and Sacrament which God has established and which the Holy Spirit empowers: To preach and teach the Word of God in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions; to administer Holy Baptism and Holy Communion; to lead us in worship; to proclaim the forgiveness of sins; to provide pastoral care; to speak for justice in behalf of the poor and oppressed; to encourage persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel; to impart knowledge of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and its wider ministry; to endeavor to increase support given by our congregation to the work of our whole church; to equip us for witness and service; and guide us in proclaiming God’s love through word and deed.

In accepting this call, you hereby promise to fulfill this pastoral ministry in accord with the standards and policies for ordained ministers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Therefore, be diligent in the study of Holy Scripture, in use of the means of grace, in prayer, in faithful service, and in holy living.

With this call, we pledge our prayers, love, esteem, and personal support for the sake of the ministry entrusted to you by God and for our ministry together in Christ’s name. Specific responsibilities, compensation, benefits, and conditions of this call are contained in a document related to this call.