

## Study Guide for

Imagining a Church that Connects Faith and Life



# THE *Scattering*

**DWIGHT L. DUBOIS**

foreword by Craig L. Nesson

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## Welcome

Welcome to a deeper look at *The Scattering: Imagining a Church that Connects Faith and Life*. Talking about the book, and then talking about how it might enrich your life, the lives of members in your congregation, and the work of your congregation will be time well spent. We hope this guide will help you engage in that conversation.

## Using this guide

This study guide is primarily written for use in a small group (e.g., council, board, or committee meetings, clergy groups, or book study groups). Individuals can also use this study guide by scanning the lesson plan for each session, then reflecting on the questions provided.

Leaders of groups should read the whole book before beginning the course and plan both the duration of the study, as well as the content of each session, well ahead of time.

The role of the leader is to *engage the participants in conversation and discovery* more than to *provide information*. There are a few occasions to provide some information (the opening session has a large block of that) but the leader should endeavor to ask meaningful questions, keep the conversation on track, and manage the time. Resist the temptation to inform participants, especially in the Bible studies. Help them to discover the important connections in your context.

The lesson plan presents the chapters in order. Leaders may want to cover all the chapters in the order they are presented in the book, pick those that are most appropriate, and/or put the sessions and chapters in the order that makes the most sense for your setting. Note that if you are rearranging the order of the sessions, leaders will want to scan each assigned chapter for references to earlier points (“As we saw in chapter 2...”). If those are part of the assigned reading, you may need to make the connection before participants read the assigned chapter, or at the very beginning of the session upon which the assigned reading is built.

Note that if your group will have ten or more participants, Wipf and Stock (the publisher) will give you a significant discount when you order the books in bulk. Call the customer service department (541-344-1528) for details.

*There are more questions for conversation and suggested activities in this guide than you can (or should!) ask in any one gathering.* Leaders will need to discern which questions are most relevant in their setting, or let the material in the guide inspire new questions that are tailored to their particular context. In addition to the questions asked below, leaders should solicit questions from participants that arose in their assigned reading.

At the end of each session, you will find potential assignments for the next session. (The assigned reading will depend, of course, on whether you have chosen to read all the chapters in order, or if you have chosen a few chapters that are most appropriate for your setting, and whether you rearranged the chapters to fit your needs.) Assigning the reading for the next session may be all that some groups can hope for; in other settings additional reflection or preparation for the next session might be helpful. In addition to the provided suggestions you may want to consider a writing assignment or a journaling and reflection activity. In some cases, you may want to assign a final paper or project that describes what they have learned and how it will influence their lives, or it might be designing a Bible study, Sunday school class, or newsletter or blog article that could be used locally and/or shared via the web with others who are working on this topic.

At the end of each session, ask participants to share prayer concerns and urge them to pray for those requests between sessions. Among the list of normal concerns (illness, grief) ask participants to pay particular attention to prayer requests that arise from the readings and conversations. For instance, someone might be struggling with how to apply faith principles in a difficult relationship with a boss.

You may want to designate someone to take notes during your conversations, recording 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. If your study group is the council or board charged with leadership of your congregation, such notes will be helpful as you seek to set the course for your congregation. The last few sessions work on this. 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 enable the rest of your congregation to be a part of this discovery process.

Since one of the goals (below) is to re-engage the ancient practices of the church, you might want to tend to the practice of hospitality. The need for this will vary greatly according to your setting, but can be as simple as providing water and coffee to arranging for a group meal. Whatever you provide is important, welcoming, and inviting. You might ask for volunteers to arrange the hospitality for each session, then (perhaps midway through the study) bring to the participants' attention the fact that God has been providing for their needs through the volunteers who have provided the hospitality.

It will be helpful to remember that additional resources are available on [www.TheScattering.org](http://www.TheScattering.org). These resources can enrich your group's conversation. In addition, when you try experiments or implement actions that are inspired by the book, please share those with other readers, either on the above website or on the Facebook page for *The Scattering*, [www.facebook.com/gatheredscatteredchurch](http://www.facebook.com/gatheredscatteredchurch)

Page numbers used in this guide, unless otherwise indicated, refer to the print version of *The Scattering: Imagining a Church that Connects Faith and Life*. Note that using a Kindle or Nook version of the book may make it difficult to find the cited pages.

## Goals for this study

Those who engage in these conversations will:

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

# 1) Introductory session

## Setting the tone: Introductions

If participants don't know each other, have them introduce themselves with 1) their name, and 2) something about who they are. When they are finished, review what participants shared about "who they are." Note the frequency with which participants described themselves in terms of something they do: a teacher, banker, farmer, or parent.

OR

If participants already know each other, have them imagine (or act out) being at a party with people they don't know. They offer their hand and tell another person their name. After the obligatory, "It's nice to meet you," what is said next? Something along the lines of, "What do you do?" or "Where do you work?", right? Have participants describe how they answer such questions.

THEN

Lead participants through the following introduction:

You have probably never used it to introduce yourself, and you've probably never seen it on a name tag, but we have an identity that supersedes any other identity that we might assume for ourselves. It is an identity that God bestows on us in our baptism. Do you know what that is? "Child of God." We baptize with the candidate's first and middle name, but we don't use the last name. Why is that? Because in baptism we are given a new last name: Child of God.

Try that out. Have participants introduce themselves again using this formula: "Hello, my name is Elizabeth Susan, Child of God." "Hello, my name is Michael Lee, Child of God."

When they are done, ask how that felt, and whether this kind of introduction meant anything to them. While acknowledging that it would be awkward if not silly to actually introduce ourselves this way, we will pursue these questions:

- What does it mean to be a child of God?
- How does that change us?

- What would it mean if we lived our lives, 24/7, with an acute awareness that we are, indeed, children of God?

Unfortunately, we often let our God-given identity stop short of its full potential. It is as if we say, "I'm God's child; isn't that cool?" and let it go at that. Or we think, "I'm baptized, so I'm guaranteed to get into heaven when I die." In other words, too often we are not aware of how this new identity affects the way we live our day-to-day lives.

According to Martin Luther, faith isn't supposed to be a private matter that only affects our self-awareness or our eternal reward. In the Large Catechism, Luther wrote,

Let everyone regard their baptism as the daily garment which they are to wear all the time. Every day they should be found in faith and amid its fruits; every day they should be suppressing the old person and growing up in the new.

We dare not walk away from worship each week thinking only, *I'm God's child; isn't that cool?* or *My ticket to heaven is still valid, should I need it.* Baptism calls us to life in the here and the now, in the roles and relationships of our everyday lives. Baptism calls us to a life and to tasks that we would never choose for ourselves. The identity given to us as children of God challenges us to live in a way that goes beyond saying "I was baptized" to saying "I am baptized—this is who I am, and this is what God calls me to be, this is what God calls me to do."

Our time together is about uncovering a richer, fuller understanding of what it means to be a child of God—not just when we gather with our sisters and brothers in Christ at church, but in all of life. Hear this promise: Our time together will not be about finding "something more" that we could or should do; *it is about uncovering (discerning—see p. 14 below) how God is present and at work in what we are already doing.* It's about finding a new perspective on our day-to-day activities—at work, at

home, at the gym, and at the coffee shop—places where we encounter real people who have real needs that are important to God.

So let's try that introduction exercise again. Introduce yourself using this formula: State your baptismal name, then follow it with one example of how God is at work in your life for the benefit of someone else. For example, "Hello, my name is Robert Edward, Child of God; I am called to raise my children so that they might make the world a better place." Or, "Hello, my name is Ellen Elaine, Child of God; I am called to provide accounting services that keep companies fiscally sound and ethically responsible." (**Note:** for now, let's not use examples like "serve on church council" or "work in the food pantry." Examples should focus on our call in the activities of our everyday lives.)

Call to mind Ephesians 4:11–13 (printed in the book before the table of contents) and the fact that God calls us, with our variety of gifts, to "the work of ministry," that is, to a life of service. (We'll get into the fact that *service* is at the root of *ministry* later on.) Offer an opening prayer, thanking God for the various callings that participants have given expression to, and asking for new insight into the ways that God is working through us for the benefit of our neighbors.

### **Group process and expectations**

Provide a brief overview of the scope and expectation of the study. This will vary according to your context. You should repeat what was said above: Our time together is about uncovering a richer, fuller understanding of what it means to be a child of God in all of life. You might include the number of times you will meet, meeting frequency, attendance, and reading expectations. If it's a more formal educational setting you might include assignments and evaluation.

Provide time for participants to add their expectations: why did they decide to participate and what do they hope to gain? Discuss any appropriate ground rules (confidentiality and respect for others would be a good starting point, as would attendance and individual participation/completion of assignments). It's helpful if the group builds the ground rules together as that increases accountability and buy-in.

### **Introduction to vocation**

Spend time unpacking the word *vocation*. What does it mean to the participants now? To get this conversation rolling you might watch the Life of Faith video "Vocation 1" on [www.TheScattering.org](http://www.TheScattering.org) > Resources > Web Links.

There is often a spectrum of understanding, from the very secular understanding that vocation = a job or a profession (hence vocational schools where one learns a trade) to a very religious understanding that vocation = a call to full-time work in the church. Wiktionary.org defines it:

#### **vocation** (*plural vocations*)

- 1 An inclination to undertake a certain kind of work, especially a religious career; often in response to a perceived summons; a calling.
- 2 An occupation for which a person is suited, trained or qualified.

In between this polarized view is an understanding in many mainstream denominations that arises out of the earlier baptismal conversation. *Vocation* comes from the Latin *vocatio* (vo-cot'-zee-oh) which means *summons, invitation, bidding, or calling*. *Vocatio* was used to translate the Greek *klesis* (clay'-sis) which means *calling*. Interestingly, *klesis* is the root for the Greek word for church: *ekklesia* (ek-clay-see'-ah) or the "called-out ones." As Christians we are "called out," not for greatness or to self-fulfillment, but to Christ-like, sacrificial service on behalf of our neighbors. This is our vocation. (See pp. 71–72 for an expansion of this etymology.)

Over the centuries, this central and critical part of faith has gone by many names. If it has not already been assigned, have someone read aloud "A Rose by Any Other Name" on pp. xvii–xviii. Discuss the variety of names that have been used. Ask which of the variations are more or less helpful to the participants. It might be helpful to list the pros and cons of the various names. Note that alternative language will be proposed in the book. Regardless of what we call it, the point is that "all of us are called to be God's agents of love, reconciliation, hope, and service," not just in what we do in and through our congregations, but in the roles, relationships, and responsibilities of our everyday lives.

### **An exercise**

Show the short video, *The Coffinmaker*, to your group. (<https://vimeo.com/65019294>) Note afterward that what this man does is never called *ministry*, but that is what it is (*ministry* in the Greek comes from the word for *service*). Discuss this man's ministry (*service*). What is it? Discuss his point: "Work is love made visible." Ask: How is your work "love made visible"? How is what you do at home, at school, or in the community "love made visible"? What is God doing through the coffinmaker? What is God doing through you?

If you have time, show the video by GE Aviation (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z9SnDrUhZxQ>) and explore the same questions as above. Or consider the story of the six year-old whose vocation arose out of his sorrow (<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/after-losing-parents-6-year-old-embarks-on-mission/>).

### **Review the Foreword and Introduction**

If participants read the Foreword and Introduction prior to this session, ask the following questions. If they haven't read them, you might assign them for the next session and ask these questions then:

- What did you see in these introductory sections that piques your interest? What points are you looking forward to digging in to?
- What did you see in these introductory sections that puzzled you? What points cause you to wonder about the usefulness of the book?
- What do you make of the author's contention that "we have been preoccupied with the health and viability of the church-as-institution for far too long"? (xvi) What indicators do you see that confirm that observation? What are you aware of that contradicts it?
- If "A Rose by Any Other Name" (xvii–xviii) was not discussed earlier, review the variety of names that have been used for this topic. Which of the variations are more or less helpful? What are the pros and cons of the various names?

### **Assignments:**

- Either now or before the next session, have participants set a personal goal for the duration of the study. (E.g., "When this study is over I would like to have practical ideas for living my faith.")
- Assign the reading for the next session (which may vary depending on the order you have chosen in "Using this guide" above).
- Remember to talk about prayer concerns (see "Using this guide" above). Include those concerns in a closing prayer that asks for God's presence and blessing throughout the upcoming study.

## 2) Chapter 1 — *Imagining a New/old Church, Gathered and Sent*

### Questions for discussion:

- Open with scripture and prayer. You could use Genesis 12:1–3 if you'd like to focus on the purpose of the church (to bless the world/work for shalom), or you could use Mark 12:28–34 if you'd like to focus on the kingdom/dream (What does “not being far from the kingdom of God” mean here?) Based on the lesson plan decide how much time you want to spend discussing the passage before offering a prayer; you can discuss it now, or you may just want to get the passage “on record” and then discuss it later. Read or sing one of the many hymns that speak to ministry in daily life.
- Remember to ask what questions arose from the reading assignment; if those questions will not be addressed in the options you choose below, cover them now and promise to answer the others later. If you assigned writing a personal goal for the study, have participants share them.
- In your own words, and based on what you read, what is God's will for the world? Where do we fit into God's will?
- What does “the kingdom of God” (or its twin, “the kingdom of heaven”) mean to you? How is “the dream of God” helpful or confusing? (For further background on this, the leader may want to read the section “Jesus and the Kingdom of God,” pp. 30–33, in Nesson, *Beyond Maintenance to Mission*.)
- In your own words, and based on what you read, summarize the nature and the purpose of the church. Where does God and God's will figure into your summary? Have the participants write a definition/purpose statement for the *church* (not just your congregation), or compose something as a group on a whiteboard or newsprint. This preliminary statement will be used and revised later.
- If participants have not heard about the missional church movement prior to reading this chapter, skip to the next question. If they have had prior exposure, ask: What has “missional church” meant to you in the past? In your experience, how true to your experience is the author's struggle (pp. 11–12) and the information in footnote 21 (p. 12)? (Skip the next option if you used this one.)
- Using your nature and purpose definition (above), how is the church missional? (See the first paragraph on p. 11 for further questions.)
- In preparation, the leader should jump ahead to chapter 4, the second paragraph of the section “The Community of the Called” (p. 71), and be prepared to give a brief explanation of the etymology of the English word *church*, particularly its roots in *ekklesia*. A mini-lecture on “the church is the people” (as opposed to a building, denomination, or worship service) might be in order. (The children's ditty, “Here's the church, here's the steeple...” might be an effective illustration.) Review the participants' definitions of the nature and purpose of the church (above) in light of the understanding that “the church is the *people*” (the Luther quote on p. 17 might be helpful in making the distinction). How might participants revise their definition/purpose statement(s) based on the view that the church is the *people*?
- Explore the bungee jumping metaphor with participants. (Make sure they saw footnote 25, p. 14, that the back-and-forth, in-and-out movement is more important than the literal up-and-down movement of bungee jumping.) What does Luther mean that “faith moves life's center from earth to heaven”? How is that different from “love moves life's center from heaven to earth?” What did Luther mean by saying, God does not need our good works”? What insight does Nesson's Identity–Mission loop add to the discussion?
- At some point (now or in later sessions) you may want to spend time on the concept of *neighbor*. In our day, *neighbor* is most likely seen as someone who lives near us. In his recent book, *Working for Our Neighbor*, Gene



Veith addresses Luther's understanding and use of *neighbor*:

The vocation of marriage entails only one neighbor: the spouse. In the vocation of parenthood, the neighbor who is to be loved and served is the child. The neighbors proper to the vocation of childhood are the parents. The family includes other neighbors—brother and sister, grandparent and grandchild, uncles and aunts, nieces and nephews.

In the vocations of the state, the neighbors for those with vocations of lawful authority are their subjects. The neighbors for citizens are their fellow citizens. The economic vocations give us many neighbors whom we are to love and serve: customers, bosses, subordinates, coworkers, suppliers, and competitors.<sup>1</sup>

- Make sure the participants understand the language the author offers regarding the gathered–scattered church; this is critical to the rest of the book (and it will be expanded in chapter 5). Read the next-to-last paragraph on p. 18 that says, “Being the church gathered without making the move to being the church scattered leads to self-absorption. Being the church scattered without returning to the church gathered leads to amnesia and exhaustion.” If the gathered–scattered tension is a spectrum, where does your congregation focus most of its attention?
- Prepare a series of index cards with one activity written/printed on each card: Serve on property committee, sing in choir, recycle, listen to a co-worker, celebrate holy communion, attend a public rally/protest, lead a cancer support group, teach ESL, coach Little League, teach Sunday school, and so forth. (Provide about 20 cards/activities). Have participants lay out the cards in two columns under the headings of Gathered Church and Scattered Church. (Divide participants into small groups if there are more than five par-

ticipants in your group.) Provide blank cards and encourage participants to add more activities. Note that the activities sometimes will not fall neatly into either column; as they figure out the placement, they should talk about the values or purposes of each activity. Once they have finished laying out the cards, have them talk about the activities under Gathered Church. How is God at work in each of these activities? Then have them do the same for the Scattered Church activities. Next, have them discuss how each item under Gathered Church can, does, or should equip us to be the scattered church. In what ways do the Gathered Church activities inhibit or distract us from our work as the scattered church? Finally, have them discuss how each item under Scattered Church prepares, calls, or requires us to return to the gathering. If we paid equal attention to our nature as scattered church, how would that affect what we do as the gathered church?<sup>2</sup>

- If you were to focus more attention on the scattering than you currently do, what might you experiment with? What might need to change? What congregational activities might be put on sabbatical for a while? What fears crop up when you talk about such changes? (We will get much more specific in sessions 8 and 9, but starting on this conversation is helpful now.)
- Remember to talk about prayer concerns and to encourage participants to keep one another in prayer between sessions.

Close with prayer, calling to mind the purpose of the church: to bless the world. Entrust both the hopes and fears of the group to God's purposes.

### **Assignments:**

- Think of someone whose life you admire and appreciate. Write a short paper (or, if possible, video an interview with the person) that highlights what you admire in his/her life. If you choose a person of faith, you can include how their faith has affected them,

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1 This is a condensed adaptation of an excerpt from Veith's book, found at <http://www.letterstotheexiles.com/working-neighbor-martin-luther-purpose-vocation/>

2 With gratitude to Myron Herzberg, pastor of Memorial Lutheran Church in Nevada, IA, for this idea. This is what happens when you try an experiment and share it with others—they get to learn from you!

but the larger purpose of this project should dovetail with the purpose of this study: What is God doing in or through her/his everyday life that benefits others?

- Write a half-page definition of ministry (with examples). **Lutherans Note:** The explanations of the Ten Commandments in the Small Catechism list what we shouldn't do and what we should. The latter provides a good starting point for defining ministry.
- If the next session focuses on chapter 2, have (some) participants review your congregation's newsletter, bulletin, announcements, and/or webpage and develop a list of the ways in which members are encouraged to participate in God's mission or ministry.
- One of the potential questions in the next session involves references to loving, serving, caring, promoting justice, and such in our liturgy and hymnody. If you're going to explore this question, you might want to have (some) participants review your worship resources and bring a list of such references to the next session.
- Assign the reading for the next session (which may vary depending on the order you have chosen in "Using this guide" above).
- For the remainder of the sessions you may want to recruit a volunteer to lead the devotion and prayer opportunities in the following session, provide them with the suggestions at the beginning and end of the session guide, and let them take over those parts of the session. The group leader needs to suggest to the volunteer which of the several options in the opening devotion will best serve the lesson plan.

### 3) Chapter 2 — A Gap in Imagination

#### Questions for discussion:

- Open with scripture and prayer. You could use Romans 12:1–8 if you'd like to focus on the variety of gifts we are given, or you could use Matthew 25:31–40 (the sheep and the goats) to introduce the idea of missing opportunities to see God at work in our daily activities. Based on the lesson plan decide how much time you want to spend discussing the passage before offering a prayer; you can discuss it now, or you may just want to get the passage “on record” and then discuss it later.
  - If you gave an assignment prior to this session (other than reading the chapter) make plans to integrate reports on that assignment into your session plan. Also remember to ask what questions arose from the reading assignment; if those questions will not be addressed in the options you choose below, cover them now and promise to answer the others later.
  - Discuss the opening story about the minister at Walgreens. Ask: Would our congregation affirm this woman's ministry? What do we actually do to support the ministry our members carry out in their daily work and relationships?
  - Review the systemic blocks reported by the pastors (pp. 24–28). Which of these are at work in your congregation? Do any of the blocks listed by pastors seem to be inappropriate or wrong? What might your congregation do to overcome such blocks?
  - Review “Testing the Results—and Being Blown Away” (pp. 31–34). How are the results in this section comparable to or different from your experience? How would you answer the author's question at the end of the last paragraph in this section?
  - Put the word “ministry” before the group for discussion (see pp. 28–29). How do we most commonly define this word? What ministries are most supported in our congregation? Where does ministry most often take place?
- (If you assigned the review of your congregation's newsletter, bulletin, announcements, and/or webpage at the end of the previous session, have participants share their results.) Compare your group's answers with those reported in chapter 2: are they more like the pastors' responses or like those reported by members? Ask: How much is our understanding of “ministry” confined to what happens in and through the congregation?
- Watch the Life of Faith video “Vocation 2” on [www.TheScattering.org](http://www.TheScattering.org) > Resources > Web Links. Then ask: What did the pastor actually say? What did the people hear? Why did they mishear what the pastor said? What was their “aha” moment? (For use in a group of pastors: What does this mean for your ministry?)
  - Refer to the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25 from the opening devotion (or have it read now if you didn't use it earlier). Why do you suppose the sheep do not realize they had been doing ministry? In what ways is this phenomenon at work in your life or your congregation? Why would “people feel that the very people and tasks to which God calls them as caregivers, servants, or ministers are keeping them from being God's people at work in the world”? (p. 37)
  - If your pastor is part of your study group explore the section “Losing Touch with the World” (pp. 29–30). Is what the book reports true to your pastor's experience? If so, what could or should be done to rewrite job descriptions or adjust congregational expectations so that your pastor is more in touch with what people do outside of the church? (Clergy groups can easily adapt these questions.)
  - Examine our understanding of busyness. Why are we so addicted to “being busy”? Some say there's an epidemic of busyness in our culture. What is the correlation between

our busyness and our sense of self-worth? Now consider the positive side of busyness: What are we busy doing? *Busyness* doesn't mean that we are wasting our time. We are busy doing important and meaningful things. So why is our busyness one of the most frequent answers to the question: "What is it that keeps you from being God's people at work in the world?"

- Have participants skim through your worship resources looking for references to loving, serving, caring, promoting justice, and such. (Note: work with groups of both pastors and lay persons has shown that it is harder to find such references in contemporary worship resources.) If participants did advance work on this, have them report their results. Explore what the phrases (e.g., "feed the hungry") mean and who accomplishes them or how they are accomplished. How could you turn generic phrases into more meaningful language that would be relevant to our daily lives? Discuss this prayer request: "Make your church a prophetic voice for the voiceless, a bold witness of love to the neighbor and a force for hope in all the world." Who is "the church" here and how is the witness accomplished? What difference does it make to pray, "Make us all prophetic voices, bold witnesses and a force for hope in our homes and neighborhoods, in our work and our community involvement"? How might you alter the language used in worship to be more concretely connected to our daily lives?
- Review "So What Do We Talk About?" (pp. 41–42). Why is it that both members and pastors operate under the assumption, "When we're at church we talk about church"? What happens when we put most of our attention on "developing active, involved churchgoers"? (p. 41) How might you start altering that assumption?
- Do the exercise suggested in "Try This At Home" (pp. 45–46). You could either do this exercise as a group, or assign it to participants to do at home. You could also begin work at the end of this session and have participants finish it before the next session.
- If the participants have read the interlude, "Keeping God in the Box" (pp. 47–48) bring it up for conversation, asking what struck home with the participants. Use it as a basis for the closing prayer, asking that we might have our eyes opened to see "how God is providing for us and for others in all the things we do, in the activities that renew and refresh us, in the food we eat, in those who provide us with food and clothing, and in our families."
- Remember to talk about prayer concerns and to encourage participants to keep one another in prayer between sessions.

Close with prayer, calling to mind the significant findings from this session, such as the gifts we all have been given for ministry and the ways that God is at work through us for our neighbor.

#### **Assignments:**

- Consider assigning the "Try This At Home" exercise (above).
- Have participants interview people to find out what their "ministry" is. They can and should interview people in your congregation that are not part of this study, as well as their own families, but interviewing people not connected with your congregation may be more insightful.
- Have participants start developing an inventory of their daily activities and responsibilities. Note: We will do more work on this concept in session 5/chapter 4, so this exercise will be preliminary, and can be revisited and added to in that session. Clergy groups: note that we will look at the daily (non-church related) lives of pastors in session 6/chapter 5, so you may want to skip this activity or adapt it to listing activities and relationships of someone participants know who is not a pastor/deacon.
- Assign the reading for the next session (which will depend on the order you have chosen in "Using this guide" above).
- Do you want to recruit a volunteer to lead the devotion and prayer opportunities in the next session?

## 4) Chapter 3 — Reimagining our Roles the New Testament Way

### Questions for discussion:

- Engage the group in a Bible study on Ephesians 4:11–13. How does the gathered–scattered understanding of the church interact with Ephesians 4? What practical differences would it make in your congregation if “we—all—become Christ’s people, ministering (*diakonia*, serving) with whatever gifts God has given us, in the many arenas of our lives—inside the church to be sure, but in the world as well, perhaps even more so” (p. 67)? [Shorter alternate: use Hebrews 10:19–22 to look at the shift from Old Testament priests to Jesus as the “great high priest,” 1 Peter 2:9 to introduce the “royal priesthood,” and/ or Acts 2:17–18 (pouring out the Spirit on all God’s people).] Based on the lesson plan decide how much time you want to spend discussing the passage before offering a prayer; you can discuss it now, or you may just want to get the passage “on record” and then discuss it later. Read or sing one of the many hymns that speak to ministry in daily life.
- If you gave an assignment prior to this session (other than reading the chapter) make plans to integrate reports on that assignment into your session plan. Also remember to ask what questions arose from the reading assignment; if those questions will not be addressed in the options you choose below, cover them now and promise to answer the others later.
- The first half of chapter 3 offers a crash course in biblical uses of priests, pastors, ministers, laity, and the like. Review the various terms that are explored, and check participants’ understanding of what is comparable to current day usage and what is different.
- What changes took place between the writing of the Old and New Testaments in the understanding of the work of priests? According to the New Testament, what differences and/or similarities exist between clergy and laity? How are the leadership roles in the New Testament similar to or different from roles we employ in our time? How did the church move from the New Testament’s diverse and diffuse model back toward the hierarchical model of the Old Testament?
- Every organization needs leadership. What aspects of our current leadership model are helpful? Based on what you read, where are the limitations or unintended consequences of our current leadership model? What adaptations could your congregation make to minimize those less-than-desirable effects? (Keep in mind that we examine a related topic, *anticlericalism*, in the first section of chapter 5.)
- What are your expectations of your pastor? What are your pastor’s expectations of members? Who is responsible for your congregation’s life and ministry? Would your congregation be healthier if you spent more time “at church” doing churchy things? How might your congregation be healthier if your pastor spent less time “at church” doing churchy things?
- What in this chapter struck you as being threatening? Why? What in this chapter struck you as being intriguing or encouraging? Why?
- How could you step out of the lay v. clergy roles in the life of your congregation? (p. 68) What difference would it make if we restored ministry to something that is entrusted to *all* God’s people? What practical steps might you take to do that?
- Remember to talk about prayer concerns and to encourage participants to keep one another in prayer between sessions.

Close with prayer, calling to mind the most significant discussion from this session, such as God’s call to all of us as priests/ministers/servants. Tie this to specific calls such as parenting, work, civic roles, and caring for friends.

## **Assignments:**

- Provide a copy of your congregation's constitution. Have participants review what it says about the purpose of the congregation, and the roles of pastors and members. (ELCA congregations should pay attention to chapter 4, especially C4.02.e. Also compare chapters 8 and 9; what differences in roles and expectations are embedded in the constitution? Also note that chapter 7 of the ELCA's (churchwide) constitution is devoted to Ministry. The first section is titled, "Ministry of the baptized people of God," and it begins, "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." While that is an encouraging and on-point beginning, things change rapidly: The next sentence says, "It is within this context of ministry that this church calls some of its baptized members for specific ministries in this church." Those specific ministries are—you guessed it—pastors and deacons, and they are detailed in the next 27(!) pages of the constitution, without another word about "equipping and supporting of all [our] members for their ministries in the world and in this church.") In all of this, what is helpful and in what ways do our constitutional documents hinder our understanding and embodiment of ministry?
- Remind participants to keep working on an inventory of their daily activities. This list will be used in the next session. (Clergy groups: take note of the adaptation in the prior session's assignment section.)
- Assign the reading for the next session (which will depend on the order you have chosen in "Using this guide" above).
- Do you want to recruit a volunteer to lead the devotion and prayer opportunities in the next session?

## 5) Chapter 4 — Building on the Imagination of Predecessors

### Questions for discussion:

- Open with scripture and prayer. You could use Genesis 1:26–27 if you'd like to focus on the how God has always called us to care for one another and for all creation, or you could read the Small Catechism's explanation of "What then does daily bread mean?" in the section on the Lord's Prayer. Based on the lesson plan decide how much time you want to spend discussing the passage before offering a prayer; you can discuss it now, or you may just want to get the passage "on record" and then discuss it later.
- If you gave an assignment prior to this session (other than reading the chapter) make plans to integrate reports on that assignment into your session plan. Also remember to ask what questions arose from the reading assignment; if those questions will not be addressed in the options you choose below, cover them now and promise to answer the others later.
- Tracing the etymology of words may be a new experience for some in your group. Check to see that they followed the progression of *calling* through the Old Testament, into the New Testament and beyond (pp. 70–72). Clarify any questions participants may have, or promise to find answers by the next session. Make sure to emphasize the *what* and the *how*. What are we called out to do? (bless the world) How can we do that? (through gathered ministries to be sure, but we do much more through our scattered ministries—yet we rarely recognize or support those ministries)
- Make sure participants understand the background and reasons for Luther's over-the-top reaction to monastic vows (pp. 72–74). Such dire language may sound odd or inflammatory to our ears. Some reading in Roland Bainton's book, *Here I Stand*, may be helpful to you as a leader. Explore the powerful implications that came out of Luther's work: that *ministry* was freed from the captivity of the clergy and restored to the lives of all the baptized people of God.
- Spend time discussing the meaning of *vocation* in light of this chapter, especially pp. 73–74. Call to mind the introduction to vocation that was covered in the first session, namely that people tend to see vocation as one of two extremes: from the very secular understanding that our vocation is what we do in a job or a profession, or as a religious call to full-time work in the church. "Vocation is not the pursuit of religious superheroes, but it is a common calling that all people receive" (p. 73).
- Given that most people have a hard time describing the everyday activities of their lives as *ministry*, perhaps the "daily bread" discussion on p. 74 can be used to help them see *ministry* in a new light: as the ways in which God is at work in our daily lives. In light of p. 74, and because many people have a hard time seeing God's hand at work in their daily lives (yet others are more able to see God at work in us), have participants revisit the inventory of activities, roles, and relationships of their daily lives that they have been developing. (If you have not assigned that exercise in an earlier session, simply have them spend a few minutes writing down a list of where, how, and with whom they spend their days.) Have participants give their list to a conversation partner; it's the partner's task to identify the ways in which God is at work in those activities for the benefit of all people and all creation. Note: framing this in terms of "What I am doing for God" is not helpful ("If you find yourself in a work by which you accomplish something good for God, or the holy, or yourself, but not for your neighbor alone, then you should know that that work is not a good work" p. 13). *What God is doing in and through you for the sake of your neighbor?* is the better approach. Clergy groups may want/need to role-play this activity using someone they know who is not a pastor/ deacon. There is an option to look at the non-church daily lives of clergy in the next session. At the end of this activity would be

a good time to engage participants in conversation about how God has been providing for our needs through those who have provided the weekly hospitality.

- Note that what the participants are doing in the above exercise is the spiritual gift of discernment. Discernment means to “see” or to “know” or to “acknowledge” what is. It is to see the movement of God; it is to see from God’s perspective. Dorothy Bass says, “Discernment is the intentional practice by which... an individual seeks, recognizes, and intentionally takes part in the activity of God in concrete situations.”<sup>3</sup> The discernment process is not so much a process of making a decision about what to do as it is of *uncovering* the movement of God in our lives. In a sense, that is what the whole of this book study is about.
- If you didn’t cover Luther’s understanding of *neighbor* in session 2 (above) this session presents another opportunity to explore that.
- “Into Our Day” (pp. 75–78) reviews the long, rich, and troubled history of vocation over the past century or so. Why is the priesthood of all believers such a persistent topic? Why do efforts to fulfill its promise keep dying off? Why has the proliferation of information produced so little change in church life? How is the use of *the autoimmune disorder of the Body of Christ* helpful to participants? What is not clear about that? What immunosuppressants might your congregation apply to counteract this condition?
- On pp. 80–81 there are descriptions of efforts that were made to counteract this autoimmune disorder, efforts that failed. What expectations and attitudes in your congregation might act as an autoimmune disorder if you seek to balance the gathering and the scattering? What could be done to anticipate and counter such resistance?
- Remember to talk about prayer concerns and to encourage participants to keep one another in prayer between sessions.

Close with prayer, giving thanks for the many “ministries” that we are discovering and asking for guidance and encouragement as we live them out daily.

#### **Assignments:**

- Develop a list (like the one in earlier sessions) of the daily activities and relationships of your pastor. Do **not** include any church-related activities.
- Assign the reading for the next session (which will depend on the order you have chosen in “Using this guide” above).
- Do you want to recruit a volunteer to lead the devotion and prayer opportunities in the next session?

3 Dorothy C. Bass, ed. *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for Searching People*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010, 105.



## 6) Chapter 5 — *Imagining a Better Way*

### Questions for discussion:

- Open with scripture and prayer. Use 1 Corinthians 14:26b-33 (it may have been part of your discussion in session 4/chapter 3) to focus on the variety of leaders in the early church, and the variety of ways that we all minister in the contemporary church. (As an alternative, one of the activities below revisits Ephesians 4; you could use that text instead.) Based on the lesson plan decide how much time you want to spend discussing the passage before offering a prayer; you can discuss it now, or you may just want to get the passage “on record” and then discuss it later. Read or sing one of the many hymns that speak to ministry in daily life.
- If you gave an assignment prior to this session, make plans to integrate reports on that assignment into your session plan. Also remember to ask what questions arose from the reading assignment; if those questions will not be addressed in the options you choose below, cover them now and promise to answer the others later.
- Have the participants define *anticlericalism*. Then have them define *clericalism*. What is the difference? What are the reasons why pastors might be threatened by an emphasis on scattered ministries? Why are members often threatened by an emphasis on scattered ministries? When might *anticlericalism* be helpful? When might *anticlericalism* do damage? What is the author’s bottom line assessment of *anticlericalism*? How is that helpful or troubling?
- List the ways that our concept of professional clergy is helpful. List the ways that professional clergy might be their own worst enemies. How is the professional wakeboarder metaphor helpful? What kind of pastor do you want (or want to be)?
- How are the terms *clergy* and *laity* most often used? (There should be many descriptions offered, but if it’s mentioned, pursue the reality that *clergy* is often equated with *professional* and *laity* is often equated with *amateur*. We get the English *amateur*, from the French, which is a translation of the Latin *amator*, lover, and *amare*, to love. In its original sense, and in many contemporary instances—think of an amateur soccer player—an amateur does something simply for the love of it. Using that understanding of *amateur* would be a lovely way—pun intended—to describe the people of God, if we could only overcome the pejorative understanding that most people assume when the word is used.) In what ways are *clergy* and *laity* helpful for living out the tension described in the Methodist *Book of Resolutions* (pp. 87–88), and in what ways do they diminish our ability to live out the priesthood of all believers?
- Review the expanded description of gathered and scattered ministers on p. 89. Do the two exercises described on that page. What happens if we drop *clergy* and *laity* and instead talk about gathered and scattered ministers? If it’s not brought up, pursue the fact (top of p. 90) that scattered ministers are not lay persons (amateurs) at all, but are often experts in their various callings.
- Review the expanded description of gathered and scattered ministries on pp. 90–91. Use the two exercises described there.
- One reality we often overlook is that pastors are scattered ministers too. Have participants refer to the list of scattered ministries for pastors from the assignment above, or if it wasn’t assigned have participants make a list of the scattered ministries of pastors and deacons. One of the shortcomings of the church is that we train pastors to be gathered ministers, often at the expense of their scattered ministries. How might your congregation empower your pastor to be a scattered minister? What difference might that make for his/her life? What difference might that make for his/her role as an equipper of all the saints?

- The scriptural foundation for all of this is Ephesians 4: equipping the saints for the work of ministry. What ideas do you have for how that equipping might happen in your congregation? Who does the equipping? (See the last paragraph in chapter 5: “we equip one another”!) In what contexts? How do we do that? (We’ll pursue this more in the following sessions, but it’s worthwhile to open the conversation to ideas at this point.)
- Remember to talk about prayer concerns and to encourage participants to keep one another in prayer between sessions.

Close with prayer, thanking God for discoveries in this session, perhaps for the variety of ways that we are called to serve in the church and in the world. Name those roles as concretely as possible.

### **Assignments:**

- Have participants write a one- to two-page description of a typical (non-church!) day in the past or coming week. Have them look for and name “God sightings” or places where faith and life intersect. Naming scripture passages that connect to their daily activities would also be helpful.
- Assign the reading for the next session (which will depend on the order you have chosen in “Using this guide” above).
- Do you want to recruit a volunteer to lead the devotion and prayer opportunities in the next session?

## 7) Chapter 6 — *Living Out the Biblical Imagination*

### Questions for discussion:

- Open with scripture and prayer. Read Mark 8:34–38. Then open conversation by asking what this passage has meant for the participants in the past. How have they heard it interpreted? What does it usually mean to die to ourselves? Have they ever considered this from a congregational perspective, dying to our corporate self? How does the prospect of doing that feel? Offer a prayer regarding the prospect of dying to ourselves, asking God for boldness to lay down our (corporate) life for the sake of the gospel.
  - If you gave an assignment prior to this session (other than reading the chapter) make plans to integrate reports on that assignment into your session plan. Also remember to ask what questions arose from the reading assignment; if those questions will not be addressed in the options you choose below, cover them now and promise to answer the others later.
  - Go ahead and ask the questions on p. 94: If we're serious about connecting faith and life in the world, if we're serious about empowering and supporting scattered ministries, why are we "competing" to take people out of the world? Dare we, instead, die to our corporate selves? Do we dare die to our preoccupation with getting people to participate in gathered ministries (especially when those are seen as something that keeps congregations vital and necessary) so that we can live out our scattered ministries in the tasks and relationships of our everyday lives? When we are the Body of Christ gathered, shouldn't we be applying the ancient practices of the church to the various vocations given to us as the Body of Christ scattered: as parents, workers, students, teammates, voters, or volunteers?
  - Why is working to create an equipping congregation a counterintuitive move? What would it take to get this counterintuitive elephant out of the room (p. 95)?
  - What would it mean to define congregational health and vitality by how well we give ourselves away as scattered ministers, in our various scattered ministries (p. 95) rather than only by what we do when we gather?
  - What might we need to let go of, and what might we need to embrace or enhance so that we can hold the importance of both the gathered church and the scattered church as equal parts of a single reality (p. 96)?
  - Engage participants in a review of the chart on p. 98. Make sure that they understand that it reads as two spectrums: from top to bottom *and* from left to right. Explore their understanding of the four types of churches presented, and that there may be no sweet spot (p. 100). What part of the chart is most closely aligned with "saving our own life"? Where does "dying to ourselves" show up? Where on the chart was the congregation that participants grew up in? Where on the chart is your congregation? Where do you want to be?
  - Based on everything you have read, and on your group discussion to this point, what changes might be appropriate in order to move your congregation to its full potential as an equipper of the saints? Start with the four topics presented on pp. 101–3, then follow the suggestion in "Try this at home" (p. 103).
  - Review the concluding section in the chapter, and especially the questions at the top of p. 104.
  - Remember to talk about prayer concerns and to encourage participants to keep one another in prayer between sessions.
- Close with prayer, revisiting the call to lay down our lives for the sake of the gospel. Entrust both the hopes and fears of the group to God's purposes.

## **Assignments:**

- Chapter 8 (pp. 126–7) makes reference to adapting our gathering liturgies. Between now and then you may want to have participants use the “Checking In” exercise as a journal. A sample can be found at [www.TheScattering.org](http://www.TheScattering.org) > Resources > Appendices from the book.
- Have participants start working on a list of changes that might be appropriate in order to move your congregation to its full potential as an equipper of the saints. Chapters 7 and 8 get more specific about possible adaptations. Starting a list and adding to it over the next two sessions will be helpful. For boards and councils undertaking this study with an eye toward implementing changes: it would be helpful to have someone set up a Google doc which everyone can add to over the coming weeks, then cull to establish a list of action steps at the end of the study.
- Assign the reading for the next session (which will depend on the order you have chosen in “Using this guide” above).
- Do you want to recruit a volunteer to lead the devotion and prayer opportunities in the next session?

## 8) Chapter 7 — *Imagining an Equipping Community*

### Questions for discussion:

- Open with scripture and prayer. You could use Psalm 67:1–2 (from the Interlude) to revisit the purpose, the “so that” of the church. Revisit the question from prior sessions: How we make God’s ways known—in addition to those things we do as the church gathered? Ask what participants took away from Forrest’s story. Give the opportunity for participants to tell similar stories, or to use the Interlude as a template to interpret their own day-to-day lives. Conclude with prayer. Read or sing one of the many hymns that speaks to ministry in daily life.
- If you gave an assignment prior to this session (other than reading the chapter) make plans to integrate reports on that assignment into your session plan. Also remember to ask what questions arose from the reading assignment; if those questions will not be addressed in the options you choose below, cover them now and promise to answer the others later.
- “It’s not the pastor’s job to know all, see all, and do all when it comes to equipping the saints for ministry; rather, it takes a village” (p. 112). If you are hoping or planning to move your congregation toward focusing on the ministries of all God’s people, who is on the “team” (see Mallory, p. 111) that will help you do that? Who needs to be invited to be part of this work? Is it central to your pastor’s sense of call (p. 113)? How can you help your pastor see and speak to the scattered church (p. 114)? (Pastor’s groups: What can you start doing, or what help do you need, to make the scattering more central to your sense of call.
- Take time to discuss the questions George Peck asks in the quotation at the bottom of p. 114. If there are no pastors in the group, ask the first two questions in terms of “What if our pastor now saw...”
- In what ways are leaders in your church communicating “that our time as the gathered church is about preparing and empowering us to be the scattered church” (p. 115)? How are leaders providing “a lens and a language for understanding their work and experiences in light” (p. 116) of the scattered nature of the church?
- What cultural and systemic expectations are at the center of your congregation? Now might be the time for some painfully honest conversation about the congregation’s self-understanding. Is self-preservation at the center? (If so, how does that manifest itself?) Is individual satisfaction (keeping everyone happy) at the center? Are programs and activities at the center? How does the congregation’s self-understanding shape its expectations and activities? What do we need to die to in order to make the gathered–scattered church a reality in our congregation?
- Have participants share their lists of ideas that might make the ministry of the saints in the world central to everything that your congregation is and does (p. 116). [If you didn’t assign this at the end of the last session, brainstorm a list now. The rule of brainstorming is to forbid questions and criticism while the list is being developed; that comes later. One person’s crazy or unaffordable idea might spur a workable idea from someone else.] Review the ideas listed to see which actions address the core nature and purpose of your congregation, and which are “icing on the cake” — optional activities for those who are interested, and prone to be abandoned when the drumbeat of the program year takes over (pp.116–8). Which idea(s) might stand the best chance of realigning “both the expectations and the structure of the congregation so that it would empower people for their work in the world” (p. 120)?
- “As a congregational leader, which would you rather spend your time on: prying out bits and pieces of members’ time, energy, and resources to support an activity of the congregation, or talking with people about

the many things they are already doing that support God's dream, and then supporting and empowering them to do those things?" (p. 119) What traditions, programs, or ongoing expectations need to be discontinued or put on sabbatical in order to reduce our focus on prying out bits and pieces of our members' time, energy, and resources? What concrete things could you start doing to support all that we are doing to live into God's dream?

- In keeping with Crabtree's discovery, what organizational systems and structures in your congregation are focused on holding-them-here rather sending-them-out (pp. 119–20)? Review the systemic blocks that pastors listed (chapter 2). Which of those are applicable in your setting? What cultural factors (p. 120: unwritten and unspoken norms and expectations) are focused on a hold-them-here mentality? Brainstorm how you might address both cultural and systemic blocks. (Note footnote 6 on p. 112: The Three Zone model is helpful here: the first task is to "ask questions and keep people in conversation." "Why do we do \_\_\_\_"? or "Why do we expect \_\_\_\_?" are good starting questions. "Do we want to continue \_\_\_\_?" then becomes a good follow-up.)
- Remember to talk about prayer concerns and to encourage participants to keep one another in prayer between sessions.

Close with prayer, calling to mind the purpose of the church: to bless the world. Entrust both the hopes and fears of the group to God's purposes.

### **Assignments:**

- If you're going to do work in the next session on reviewing and discussing the priorities reflected in your annual reports, budgets, Time and Talent sheets, and the like, you may want to have participants do that work ahead of time in order to facilitate your discussion.
- Continue work on the list of changes that might be appropriate in order to move your congregation to its full potential as an equipper of the saints.

- Take a look at the list of reasons "Why you don't need to wait to start working for a gathered-scattered church" on [www.TheScattered.org](http://www.TheScattered.org) > Resources > Helpful books and articles. Consider how you might use this list with the participants to encourage them as they work toward making changes in your congregation.
- Assign the reading for the next session (which will depend on the order you have chosen in "Using this guide" above).
- Do you want to recruit a volunteer to lead the devotion and prayer opportunities in the next session?

## 9) Chapter 8 — *From Imagination to Reality*

### Questions for discussion:

- Open with scripture and prayer. Look through the “Connecting Worship and the World” section (pp. 126 ff.), then pick one worship connection in your congregation’s last worship service (e.g., one of the communion prayers that starts preparing worshipers to be sent back into the world, a hymn, or a gospel reading) and use it as the basis for your devotional conversation. Ask: Where have you seen this (prayer, reading, hymn) lived out in your life this past week? Offer a prayer based on the discussion, anticipating this final session on how to make the gathered–scattered church a reality in your congregation.
- If you gave an assignment prior to this session (other than reading the chapter) make plans to integrate reports on that assignment into your session plan. Also remember to ask what questions arose from the reading assignment; if those questions will not be addressed in the options you choose below, cover them now and promise to answer the others later.
- Make an inventory of “the canopy of mature programs and activities in your congregation” (p. 124). Once your list is done, examine which of these already support members in their ministries in the world; could any of those be tweaked so that they are more tightly aligned with the principles of both gathering and scattering? Which of the programs and activities might be “overshadowing that which God is calling us to be and do in the world” and therefore need to be changed, put on sabbatical, or eliminated?
- “Shifting our thinking, our teaching and preaching, our life together in community, and our conversation so that the scattering is as important as the gathering” (p. 126) need not be a matter of reinventing the wheel. In what ways are your members already talking about “work, families, volunteer activities, and recreational pursuits” (p. 125)? How might you take the next step to train one another to see the activities of our daily lives “as the means by which God is at work through us for the welfare of our neighbors” (p. 125)? How might the list of reasons “Why you don’t need to wait to start working for a gathered–scattered church” (see assignments, previous session) be helpful for your group?
- Our worship already has abundant references to applying our faith to life in the world, but they tend to be generic (e.g., feed the hungry, work for justice). While we are adept translating these generic references into concrete examples in terms of that which happens in or through the congregation (see p. 42) we are not as adept at identifying and supporting these activities in our daily lives (see the story in the middle of p. 41). Using the possibilities provided on pp. 126–33, what might you do to strengthen the various components of worship so that all of us “are overtly and concretely equipped to go in peace to serve the Lord” (p. 126)? Which of the possibilities excite you the most? Which offer the best potential for putting the scattering at the center of the gathering?
- Have participants pay attention to the words and phrases used in the coming week’s worship. They might be encouraged to make a list of references to loving others, easing burdens, and the like, or if you used the exercise in sessions 2 and 3 above they can build on the list they developed earlier. The more important task will be developing ideas on how to make those references more concrete.
- The section on faith formation returns to the difficulty we explored in session 5 about seeing God at work in our daily lives. If you didn’t use the exercise in session 5 in which a partner identifies the way in which God is at work in our daily activities, consider using it now. If you did use it, you have a model that you can put to work throughout your congregation’s existing groups and programs!

- What spiritual practices are already employed in your congregation? (See the list of examples on p. 135.) What opportunities might those existing practices hold for equipping the saints for the work of ministry?
- Spend time brainstorming ways that you might alter your faith formation and spiritual practices to align the principles of both gathering and scattering. Pick the most promising ideas and experiment! (Then share your experiment on [www.TheScattering.org](http://www.TheScattering.org).)
- Consider downloading the report on the stewardship and evangelism conversations from [www.TheScattering.org](http://www.TheScattering.org) (footnote 16, p. 136) and adapting that process for use in your congregation. Or do the “Try this at home” exercise on p. 138 with your group.
- Consider doing the “Try this at home” exercise on p. 140. You might do some of this exercise ahead of time and bring your results to the group for conversation. Don’t forget to include a review of the priorities reflected in your budget and Time and Talent sheets (if you use those or something similar; even spiritual gifts inventories often ask “What can you do for the gathered church?”). As the author says, “Ask questions about why we report what we report. List those things that are not reported that should be included to more accurately reflect the importance of both the gathered and scattered church. From there, brainstorm ways that you might reshape the reports in your congregation, and in the process focus more on the ministry we all perform as God’s scattered ministers” (p. 140). Consider discussing possibilities like those suggested on pp. 140–1. If your group is working on a list of possible changes, add these to it.
- If, when the course started, you assigned writing a personal goal for the study, have participants review and evaluate how they did. Do they need or want to set new goals now?
- Offer a concluding prayer or rite of blessing. Lutherans can use the Affirmation of Christian Vocation on p. 84 of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*; there is also a prayer for “Vocation in daily life” on p. 82. Include a

reading of John 20:19–23 (“As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”) Take seriously the instruction in the order of affirmation to have participants offer a description of the area of service to be affirmed prior to the blessing and prayer. Conclude with a sending hymn if possible.

### **Assignments:**

- If this is your last session, you may want to consider next steps. You could schedule one final session in which to talk about potential actions that you might take. As the introduction to this study suggested, you might consider publishing a readers’ digest version of your conversations for your congregation. Councils and vestries might want to cull the list of actions you’ve been developing and assign specific tasks to existing committees or groups, or to establish a task force to work on implementation.
- When you start experimenting and implementing, share what you’re doing on [www.TheScattering.org](http://www.TheScattering.org) or on our Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/gatheredscattered-church](https://www.facebook.com/gatheredscattered-church).



## About the Author

The Rev. Dwight L. DuBois (MDiv, STM) served three congregations in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America prior to becoming the director of the Center for Renewal at Grand View University in Des Moines, Iowa. At the Center he led numerous projects, including the Ankeny Forum, the Congregational Leadership series, and the Sacred Practice Leadership Series, a six-part continuing education event cosponsored with the Alban Institute. He is now one of the leaders of the ELCA's Life of Faith Initiative ([www.lifeoffaith.info](http://www.lifeoffaith.info)). He is an adjunct instructor on the faculty of Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa, teaching a course on the promise and challenges of empowering and equipping members for ministry in daily life. He also teaches at the Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center and Luther Seminary, is a presenter at a variety of workshops, conferences, and judicatory gatherings, and serves occasionally as an intentional interim pastor. (See [www.TheScattering.org](http://www.TheScattering.org) > Invite Dwight to Speak for more information.) Oh! And he also makes wooden bow ties and liturgical furnishings under the brand name of Parson's Bench ([www.parsonsbench.com](http://www.parsonsbench.com)). It's all part of his vocation. :-)