

ACCOMPANIMENT BIBLE STUDY - INTRODUCTION

Were not our hearts burning

Welcome to Faith on the ELCA Accompaniment Bible Study. In their original context, the stories in the Bible were not read in monotone from a formal lectern; rather, they were vividly shared around the campfire and urgently passed on from one generation to another. Like the experience of the disciples encountered Jesus on their walk to Emmaus, opening up the Scriptures is meant to leave us feeling with our hearts strangely warmed! Coming out of an oral culture, the stories in the Bible were recorded in a way that invites the listener to get to know the characters—to see them as relatable, fully human beings, rather than distant “holy heroes.” In this Bible study, participants will be invited to take on the roles of the characters in the story and will have a chance to bring these characters to life and engage directly with their stories. In an effort to emphasize the centrality of the text, participants need only a Bible to take part in the studies. Alternatively, a Scripture handout is provided, which simply gives the text of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible divided into character parts.

Shared discovery

Each section begins with reading a portion of text out loud. Then the facilitator invites participants to share what they hear or notice in the text. These questions help keep the class focused on shared discovery and avoid the tendency to reduce the study to simply transferring information from teacher to student. Everyone in the session has something to offer and something to learn. The facilitator’s main role is to create “space” for exploration, openness, and—taking cues from the Bible itself—a good deal of fun.

Accompaniment: Context, values and capacities

Each of the five sessions in the Bible study explores one of the core **values** and one of the **capacities** of accompaniment and seeks to explore them in a particular context—a short-term mission trip, a cross-generational experience, a companion synod relationship, etc. As we engage the Scriptures, we will discover together values that help and support us as we celebrate, reflect, act and examine our work in God’s world. In learning to “walk together”—to accompany one another—we need to be able to talk honestly, to share with one another, to get to know one another. It takes time, thought and commitment to learn to see how we create boundaries, to perceive the asymmetries in our relationships, and to respond to them from Christ’s reconciling mission. Like so much in our spiritual lives, this requires commitment and discipline. Because we are broken, we need the help of God’s Holy Spirit to continue to return again and again to God’s reconciling mission. So each session invites us to explore how we may develop the capacities within us to walk with our companions on the way and to meet Christ on the road.

How to use the facilitator guides

Due to the level of preparation required and the interplay of meaning across the sessions, it is recommended that the same person(s) facilitate all five sessions of the study. **Each session has more material than what can be covered in a regular one-hour session; therefore an important part of the facilitator’s preparation is making choices about the questions, activities, tips and extras that would be best suited for your particular group.**



Each facilitator guide is organized in two columns:

- The right column contains the guiding questions and activities for each session. The sections in red indicate the core questions for the study that can be covered in an hour. Additional questions can be used to enrich the conversation or if additional time is available.
- The left column provides direction for approaching the guiding questions as well as additional materials and activities (“Tips” and “Extras”) to help you flesh out the study for your context. Inform yourself with the background information and select from the Tips and Extras to structure the session based on the time available for the study and your personal knowledge of the group.
- Feel free to reframe these questions to better suit your group. Your goal is to create “space” for participants to share insights and reflections on the text.

Spend about 50-60 minutes preparing for each session following these simple steps:

1. Spend a moment in silence or prayer to collect your thoughts and ask for the Spirit’s guidance.
2. Read through the Bible text assigned for the session. Jot down any details you note, images it evokes in you, or questions it raises.
3. Read through the guiding questions in the right column, noting the portions in red that are suggested as the core elements for a one-hour session. Imagine your study-group and make decisions about the question you feel would better fit their interests and abilities. Feel free to adjust the language of the questions as you see fit.
4. Read again through the guiding questions, this time reading also the material in the left column. Highlight or underline parts you find particularly helpful or make additional notes that may enhance your ability to lead the session. Choose any extra activities you may want to include.
5. Gather enough Bibles or prepare enough copies of the Scripture handout for all participants.

Introduction

The phrase “Cross-Generational Engagement” creates an image of all ages gathering around the cross and journeying together. A cross-generational approach embedded within a community of faith meaningfully engages children, youth, young adults, adults and elders into the everyday conversations, planning, life and witness of that congregation. When a congregation practices cross-generational ministry locally, the core values and action steps that form the foundation for Accompaniment and mission are present and active.

Our newspapers are filled with articles about generational characteristics and the challenges and benefits of working together. Scripture is also filled with references to the “generations.” Our faith language refers to “passing on our faith to the next generation.” Yet, seldom are people able to name all the generations or recognize each generation’s uniqueness.

For our purposes, it is not so important to know the names of each generation or even the specific age span. It is important to recognize that each generation’s beliefs and values are shaped by its time in history. Each generation has a unique worldview. Each generation offers a gift to the other generations. The body of Christ is not complete when the views, skills, faith narratives and perspectives of a generation are absent in the ministry and life of a congregation and community.

Why Engage All Generations?

Through active engagement of all generations our congregations have an opportunity to practice Accompaniment and to introduce individuals and households to a healthy, local and global perspective. Mission is strengthened at all levels when the gifts of every generation are woven into the very fabric of the faith community. The building of sustainable, trusted and authentic relationships through meaningful conversation, shared rituals, playing and working along side one another is essential.

In her book “Almost Christian,” Kenda Creasy Dean states that, “A generative faith . . . requires a missional imagination. Our missional principles describe not only the way we ferry faith across borders but across generations.” She writes: “Peer groups have their place in ministry, but when churches mimic the age-stratification created by a market-driven culture, discipleship formation suffers. . . . Teenagers reporting high degrees of religious devotion did not get that way on their own: their faith is the legacy of communities that have invested time, energy, and love in them, and where the faith of adults inspires the faith of their children.”

The goal for cross-generational engagement is for the ministry of Accompaniment to be embodied and practiced locally, right where one lives and works. To discover, experience and celebrate the wondrous moments as the generations break bread together at the Lord’s table, on the kitchen table and walk along side one another, locally and globally. The desired outcome is an authentic community representing the gifts, experiences, faith stories and cultures of diverse ages and multiple generations for the purpose of reconciliation, within our own households and congregations, as well as the community and the world. As the generations journey together, our congregations will be infused with a new perspective and sense of identity and mission.



Drawing on Ephesians 4:5, the Rev. Bill Bixby, campus pastor at Thiel College, wrote in the Summer 2010 edition of the YMNet Connect Journal, “Cross-generational ministry is nothing more, and nothing less, than a commitment to be God’s many gifts/no walls Church! That is, to claim and to live out the *mutual blessing, mutual up-building and mutual challenge* that youth and elders can offer each other, centered in “. . . *one Lord, one faith, one baptism . . .*”

Embracing the Core Values of Accompaniment

Congregations are a vast, untapped potential for bringing the generations together to accompany one another through life’s milestones, challenges, celebrations and in the mission of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. One is not too young to serve nor too old to serve. We are all the church of today.

Accompaniment means dwelling in God’s word together. The goal is to receive God’s story and discover God’s presence in my story and your story. In the end, it is all about nurturing faith and a purposeful life in Jesus Christ that brings redemption and healing to the world.

St. Augustine wrote, “It is solved by walking.” Accompaniment bears fruit when we truly walk the road together. When we get to know one another – to undo the boundary of strangeness or suspicion between generations. When we make decisions, share resources, recognize expertise, tell stories, and build networks we engage in God’s mission.

Summary

A keynote speaker at a Global Mission Gathering said this, “Accompaniment has become for us a word that overflows with meaning – what we believe about God and about our cross-formed local and global community. Accompaniment is a word that contains our joy-filled wonder at moments and at relationships that shine with God’s grace.”

Resources for Generational Ministry through an Accompaniment Lens

- ELCA Global Mission. Excellent resources that give the foundation for Accompaniment: a lens and methodology for local and global mission. <http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Global-Mission/How-We-Work.aspx>
- The Lutheran. “Don’t just plan a mission trip . . .” June 2012. http://www.thelutheran.org/article/article.cfm?article_id=10749
- Select Learning: Service and Learning (Video & Streaming Formats) <http://www.selectlearning.org/store/all/service-and-learning-digital-downloadstreaming-only>. This resource was developed specifically through the lens and language of Accompaniment. It offers approaches to Service and Learning as a way of life. Six sessions, each designed for 50-60 minutes of interaction: 20-minute video, group conversation and reflection. FREE: [Session 6. What Does the Research Tell Us about Service and Learning?](#)

Research and Information on Generations

- Explanation of the generations and related websites. wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Y
- Work of Strauss & Howe, generational experts, and a current blog. www.fourthturning.com



General Resources for Engaging the Generations

- Faith Formation Learning Exchange – a one-stop site for all things related to generational ministry <http://www.faithformationlearningexchange.net/multigenerational-faith-formation.html>
- Lifelong Faith Journal: the Theory and Practice of Lifelong Faith Formation <http://www.lifelongfaith.com/lifelong-faith-journal.html>
- HomeGrown Faith. Resources for building a cross+generational ministry in your congregation. <http://homegrownfaith.net/resources/publications/>
- Points of View. Resources dedicated to bringing the five living generations together <http://www.pointsofviewinc.com/>
- Search Institute. Resources specifically for creating intergenerational community <http://www.search-institute.org/>

Readings for Developing a Generational Lens

- Bass, Dorothy and Don Richter, eds. *Way to Live: Christian Practices for Teens*. Nashville, Tenn.: Upper Room, 2002.
- Benson, Peter. *All Kids Are Our Kids*. San Francisco, Calif.: Josey-Bass, 1997.
- Dean Creasy, Kenda. *Almost Christian*. New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Dean Creasy, Kenda and Ron Foster. *The Godbearing Life*. Nashville, Tenn.: Upper Room Books, 1998.
- Eeman, Carl. *Generations of Faith*. Alban Institute, 2003.
- Hardel, Dick and Merton Strommen. *Passing on the Faith*. Winona, Minn.: Saint Mary's Press, 2008.
- Lloyd-Jones, Sally. *The Jesus Storybook Bible*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2007.
- No More Us & Them, *100 Ways to Bring Youth & Church Together*. Loveland, Colo.: Group, 1999.
- Richter, Don. *Mission Trips that Matter: Embodied Faith for the Sake of the World*. Nashville, Tenn.: Upper Room, 2008.
- Thompson, Marjorie. *Family the Forming Center*. Nashville, Tenn.: Upper Room, 1996.
- Vollbracht, James. *Stopping at Every Lemonade Stand*. New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books, 2001
- Wiebe Funk, Katie. *Bridging the Generations*. Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 2001.

ACCOMPANIMENT BIBLE STUDY - VALUES AND CAPACITIES

ACCOMPANIMENT VALUES

MUTUALITY: Together, we work to build up our capacities to proclaim and live out the gospel of Christ. We work to recognize that all of us have gifts to offer to God's mission, and to value the gifts of all, while caring for one another's needs. Mutuality is built upon giving and receiving trust as we grow together.

VULNERABILITY: Vulnerability is the driving force in opening ourselves to relationship and God's reconciliation in mission. In the dominant U.S. culture, vulnerability often seems to be a weakness, but Jesus shows us that vulnerability — openness to relationship, giving up power — is God's way of redemption. We choose to enter God's mission through vulnerability, just as Jesus became vulnerable to us and with us.

INCLUSIVITY: God calls us to include everyone in the mission of reconciliation, yet we know that all communities exclude someone. In accompanying one another, we look to see who is excluded, and why, and commit to change community structures and habits that can exclude people without any deliberate intention. For those who experience exclusion, as well as for those who are "inside," it takes great effort and courage to continue to attempt to build relationships across boundaries. Inclusivity requires self-reflection and honesty about our own communities and relationships. We often must ask ourselves, "Who is part of our community? Who is absent? Why?"

EMPOWERMENT: As we accompany one another, we struggle to recognize and name power as it affects our relationships. When we recognize that relationships have asymmetries of power, and struggle to balance and correct those asymmetries, we are working to empower ourselves and one another. Learning to let go of power — to become vulnerable — is an act of empowerment, as is recognizing and standing up to power that hobbles people in their walk through life.

SUSTAINABILITY: Often we imagine our relationships as simple and self-sustaining. In fact, relationships are complex and connected to other relationships and commitments and require much attention over time to sustain. The accompaniment value of sustainability means that we recognize that any given relationship will require an intentional commitment of attention and time to build up all those who are involved. In a mission project context, sustainability means embedding the project or work in the community as a whole so that the project doesn't depend only on one or two people and can continue over time.

ACCOMPANIMENT CAPACITIES

HOSPITALITY: How can we move beyond a generic welcome to creating a space that our companions find truly welcoming, where their gifts are honored and expressed? Christ's mission of reconciliation is an intimate challenge to the way we live and to our fear of vulnerability.

EMPATHY: As we grow in our compassion, in our ability to feel the pain and joy of our companions and of all those who share the earth with us, we move from pity to compassion, from compassion to empathy, and from empathy to radical solidarity with our brothers and sisters.



ASSET-BASED THINKING: We learn to see our companion and ourselves as people and organizations with many assets, gifts and strengths and to identify what these are. Acknowledging asymmetries of power in relationships, we work to recognize that what has been seen as negative can actually be positive, a strength and a resource to contribute to God's mission of reconciliation.

SYSTEMS-BASED THINKING: Learning to perceive the connections and interdependencies between self and other, between groups of people, between people and the earth, recognizing asymmetries of power in relationships, and connecting the dots between our personal lives and systemic realities.

PRAYER AND WORSHIP: We are accompanied by Christ on our journey. God is always there for us. A discipline of regular prayer engages us with God's presence and God's reconciling mission. Similarly, as we worship together, we learn to accompany one another and to become more inclusive as we gather at God's table. The baptismal font reminds us of the source of our calling to God's mission. We are sent out in the ministry of reconciliation and love. We engage and celebrate the gifts of worship, prayer and music of all of our sisters and brothers.

ACCOMPANIMENT BIBLE STUDY - SAMPLE STEWARDSHIP GUIDELINES

- 1. What sort of principles and philosophies should the organizations that we give to stand for?**
Support organizations that listen to the communities they help to identify what those communities feel is their real/greatest need.
- 2. How does the organization understand its role as an aid organization and an agency of the church, especially in terms of approaches to evangelism?**
Support organizations that give aid regardless of faith tradition and do not make conversion a pre-condition to aid. Organizations that seek to communicate the Gospel through actions—and when necessary use words. Organizations that are consistent with the service goals of the ELCA.
- 3. Can our commitment be fulfilled in the period of the academic year?**
It is difficult to sustain a project beyond the term of the council that has selected it.
- 4. Is this a local, regional, national, or international project?**
We will seek a balance between local and global concerns in all our giving, so it is important to keep track of the things we support through the year.
- 5. Does the project uplift communities or individuals?**
Preference will be given to projects that are communal and emphasize sustainability rather than handouts, and that provide education about the causes of identified needs.
- 6. What do we know about the organization's administrative costs (how much goes to administration, fundraising, etc., and how much goes directly to the actual cause)?**
We will give preference to organizations (i.e. Lutheran World Relief) that have good statistical standings in regard to ratio of the money kept for administrative purposes.
- 7. Is this project one that will capture the imagination/interest of our congregation?**
We need to discuss our preferences in terms of whether we want to emphasize educational projects, children, adult development, etc? Can we come up with a couple of categories we want to make sure to keep in mind through the year?