

Thank you for your willingness to provide leadership for "Faith, Sexism, Justice: Conversations toward a Social Statement." As the ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ, we pray that you will be blessed by the Spirit's presence as you participate with your congregation or group in this conversation about women and justice. We believe the conversation is vitally important in itself but deeply appreciate that your leadership will enable robust conversation and response as part of the ongoing work toward a social statement for the ELCA.

We have created this study with an expansive set of material, multiple entry points and varied ways to use it. It has been prepared with a modular approach – each module with a different writer – because we hope to aid many different audiences to engage these issues and provide response. Perhaps you are the pastor or member of a congregation where studies typically last three to four Sundays. Perhaps you are the leader of a study circle. Perhaps you wish to use these materials for your own learning and reflection. Perhaps you are a college or seminary professor with the ability to devote more time and depth. Be realistic about your timeframe and audience and then feel free to pick and choose what to cover. Look at the Going Deeper material as an option. Some additional materials also are found online only.

If your situation requires you to pick and choose modules, please use at least Module 1 because it provides a common foundation for the others. Module 2 also introduces general material that informs the remaining module topics. While every module is important, the remaining modules can be used in any number and order. In each one, the "must read" paragraphs are highlighted in green shading as a signal of the core material within the abundance of information, explorations, activities and conversation points. Give attention to these paragraphs as a way to lead participants into deep and fruitful conversation, rather than a forced march through every word in the module.

To help you prepare for your task, here are a checklist, tips for leadership and specific instructions on how to lead each module.

GUIDANCE

- Each basic module is planned to be 60 minutes long.
- Each participant should have either a printed copy of the booklet, a downloaded module or access to the electronic version.
- Modules 1 and 2 set the stage for all the other modules. Other modules can be used in any order, depending on your group's needs and interests.
- Learning objectives for each module (found in the side bar of each module) will help you clarify the learning goals.
- Learning objectives and the conversation covenant should be reviewed at the beginning of each session.
- More than enough discussion questions have been provided; be selective according to the needs and context of your group.

- Bible passages are from the NRSV, unless otherwise noted. Be aware that other Bible translations may word things a little differently. This matters in particular for this study because some translations may emphasize male-centered choices of wording.
- The stories and illustrations found in this study are summaries of actual incidents as reported by members of the ELCA task force. If statistics or news stories are used, they are cited as the source. All seek to be true to contemporary life.
- The “Out the door” at the end of each module provides material for extending the learning and reflection into the next week.
- Response forms are available online or near the back of the study. There also is an overall response form found on page 137 or online at <https://surveys.elca.org/scripts/rws5.pl?FORM=wjssoverall>. Please encourage these to be used. These are the primary means for communicating responses to this study with the ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice. Providing feedback in this way or online offers a valuable opportunity to join thousands of others in the work toward a social statement on women and justice.

1. Read through the entire study guide

Participants rely on you as a leader to have done background work to see the whole picture so that they can invest in each piece of the study. This study covers important theological content about women and justice, as well as ideas and data that span several arenas. Reading the entire study carefully will help you communicate its significance and overall approach.

2. Consider shared leadership

The task force envisions these seven modules as opportunities for conversations. In that spirit, invite another leader or a small team to share leadership with you. Your conversations as leaders about the material will help prepare you for the give-and-take likely to occur in the class. Having more than one leader over a seven-module period can help participants stay more engaged.

3. Rely on the structure that the study uses for modules

Each module was written by a different author but with a similar structure that includes:

- Module objectives stated in the side bar of each module
- Opening and closing devotional practices
- Scripture texts and other biblical reflection
- Examples, stories and data
- Group-oriented exercises
- Key topics and ideas, often expressed in “must read” paragraphs
- Discussion questions

Do your best to get through the module each time, even if you have to shorten some of the sections. Watch for the shading in the text to identify key points.

4. Be prepared with the necessary materials and handouts

Ensure that participants have the materials they need, which may include Bibles, paper, pens and copies of the handouts. The best hospitality often comes down to a functioning copy machine and a calm leader!

5. Include Scripture and prayer in your preparations

Many of the examples and feelings evoked in this study touch on personal issues and feelings. Asking people to be vulnerable and share experiences, rather than merely sharing opinions, requires both leaders and participants to create a safe space. Spend time with the NRSV Scriptures that are part of each module during the week before. Sit in prayerful silence, holding the lives and needs of participants in God's care. Share these reflection practices with other participants.

6. Remember that it is the good news in Jesus Christ that unites us

Participants will bring a wide variety of thoughts, beliefs and opinions about the topics discussed in this study on women and justice. At times it may feel like their ideas are widely divergent and impossible to resolve. That isn't necessarily a problem. This is a conversation, after all, rather than a consensus. What's essential is to remind ourselves that we meet within the inclusive ministry of Jesus Christ and the good news of his life, death and resurrection.

7. Prepare yourself to be a non-anxious presence

Obviously the issues your group discusses about women and justice will resonate in different and personal ways for each participant. Remember that you are a guide who is facilitating a conversation. Use these ideas to maintain your positive leadership:

- Work to see disagreements as places for dialogue.
- Be a neutral, non-anxious presence.
- Remind participants that listening is as valuable as speaking.

8. Get grounded in discussion management

The nature of this study and its many connotations can easily spark lively discussions and even conflict. Rather than being surprised by varying views or feeling unprepared to navigate difficult moments, we suggest you review resources about discussion facilitation. Use these ideas when the discussion stalls out in conflict:

- Invite group members into a moment of silence.
- Ask participants to take time to write down their thoughts and feelings.
- Go back to the text to reground yourselves.

- Stop for a moment of prayer.
- Reread the conversation covenant aloud.

9. Use your words

One of the ways to work constructively through confusion and potential conflict is to recognize that words mean different things to different people. In fact, Module 6 addresses how language matters greatly for this topic. The study includes a glossary of terms used in the modules. Be sure to point participants to this glossary on page 112, so they can refer to it to help define new concepts and understand ways that they are using vocabulary.

10. Create safe space

Providing appropriate care for the participants engaged in the study is very important. Not all participants will have the same knowledge or the same emotions about the topics related to women and justice. Some people will be encountering new ideas; some people may find some of the topics upsetting; still others may find that some of the topics or words in a module provoke deep anxiety or disturbance for them related to previous trauma. This occurrence is referred to as “triggering.” People whose prior experience of trauma is re-provoked can become physically uncomfortable to the point of having anxiety attacks or flashbacks of the past event.

As a leader, you will not be able to predict participants' responses. What you can do is to create as much safety as possible for individuals. Here are some useful guides:

- a. Encourage participants to review module content before participating and remind them ahead of time what the content of the next session is so that people can make choices about participation.
- b. If you know about trauma among members of your group, you could address this privately. For instance, you could talk to someone you know who is a survivor of assault or abuse in the group to help them decide about their participation in talking about violence in Module 5. Or, if they are forewarned, a survivor may choose to skip that session.
- c. More often, you may not know some of these deeply personal matters even though members have talked often together. In this case, it can be helpful to acknowledge with the group that topics about sexism can be personally challenging and may involve memories of trauma for some people. Remind participants that some of the people in the room are statistically likely to have experienced the issues the study addresses. Reassure participants that they do not need to share their personal experiences unless they choose to. Encourage all participants to speak sensitively, using I-statements, and not to make assumptions about other participants and their experiences.
- d. A useful exercise in certain settings can be to have all members write down on a piece of paper any specific topics that they think might be a “trigger” for someone. These papers should be handed in to you privately as leader. You must indicate that you will keep these confidential. The point is that

participants think about this together and that you are clear you are not asking individuals to identify themselves to you or anyone in the group. With such a list, you can use pastoral sensitivity whenever the conversation nears these topics. This is an important way to create a safe space for everyone. Make it as natural as possible.

11. Highlight the purpose of this process and urge participants or a designated member to complete the response forms

These are found either at the end of the print version or online at <https://surveys.elca.org/scripts/rws5.pl?FORM=wjssoverall>. Encourage participants to use one of these options each week. Each response is read by several members of the task force or staff, and an overall report will be made available online after the close of the response period, August 31, 2017. In Module 1, you will find a summary of the way that participating in this study contributes to the larger mission of preparing a new social statement for the ELCA. Remind participants that this is a valuable opportunity to serve more than your own setting or congregation. The ELCA is all of us together.

12. Be a learner-leader and provide ways to Go Deeper

The best teachers never stop being curious learners themselves. Relish your privilege to lead this study as a way to educate yourself about matters concerning women and justice that surround us, as well as the faith that sustains us. In a sense you will become something of a local "expert" because you will be doing the preparations and introducing new material. Participants will expect that of you. But maintaining an attitude that participants' lives encompass "expertise" also adds a necessary level of respect and shared interaction. You can particularly serve those participants who are motivated to Go Deeper in their education by referring them to ELCA.org/womenandjustice for a wealth of additional resources.

LEADER'S PREPARATION GUIDE FOR EACH MODULE

MODULE 1: WHY DO WE NEED TO TALK TOGETHER?

Materials

- Handouts (see below)
- Pencils
- Paper
- Whiteboard and markers
- Timer
- Candle, if using this option

How to prepare

- Distribute copies of Module 1, pencils and paper to each participant.
- Print out enough copies of this module's handout, found below.

- Decide ahead of time which of the devotional activities you wish to use. (See Devotional Options.)
- Invite one or two participants to read the Scripture.

The core of this module is the covenant for conversation. Please do not skip this or skimp on time. The covenant sets the framework for all additional conversations. Spend ample time doing the covenant-making exercise.

It is essential to think ahead as a leader of this module about how you can explain the importance of practices and attitudes that create a safe space for conversation. Good conversation always depends on safety in speaking and listening. Conversations about sexism can be especially delicate since personal identities and beliefs are so tightly woven into this conversation. Remember that many, many women and girls have negative personal experiences connected to what is being discussed here. In particular, read, or reread, the section in the Leader's Guide, Tip 10, above. As a leader take the time and make the space for welcome and safe conversations.

COVENANT GUIDELINES FOR CONVERSATION¹

Follow the Golden Rule. Remember “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” even when you disagree with others, maybe especially in that case.

Listen respectfully and carefully to others. This is your best way to begin to understand them and to keep the “public space” of this conversation safe for candid conversation. Listening helps bring out differences and helps to probe for shared values and positions. By listening carefully to others, you help build relationships of trust.

Speak honestly about your thoughts and feelings. Honesty about your thoughts and feelings expresses respect for others. Personal thoughts, feelings, values and experiences are as legitimate a part of the conversation as factual information. Conversation can be quite passionate and still be respectful and civil.

Speak for yourself, only. You do not know exactly what anyone else in a group is thinking or feeling, even if you've known someone for a long time. Use “I-statements” rather than “you-statements.” Likewise, it is not fair to expect other conversation partners to represent a whole group. Remember that they are only speaking for themselves.

Realize that the Holy Spirit is present and active in the conversation and has given each participant a particular perspective in your common discernment. But you won't hear that if you judge too quickly what is being said!

A true conversation needs give and take. Everyone should be encouraged to speak and to listen. Help keep the discussion focused by sticking to the subject at hand.

Maintain confidentiality about matters people share with the group when it is asked or obviously appropriate. Remember: If in doubt, do not share elsewhere. This helps to build and maintain trust.

Keep an open mind and heart. Try to understand others as much as possible from their point of view as they express it. Even those who disagree with you strongly may have new insights to ponder. Christ has broken down dividing walls of differences and hostilities (Ephesians 2:13-14).

Exercise care for group members, with a special concern for those who become upset over what is said during the conversation.

In a conversation of this kind, genuine listening is as important as, or more important than, talking.

Genuine listening is not a passive activity, but an active, demanding one. Listen not only for the content of what is said but for the way it is said – such as the tone, the kind and level of feeling expressed, the body language and facial expression. Also be attentive to what is not said. Being more conscious about this kind of deep listening will help each of us to hear and understand better what other people are saying.

The outcome, quality and safety of the conversation are everyone's responsibility.

¹ Adapted from “Talking Together as Christians About Tough Social Issues,” (Chicago: Division for Church in Society, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1999).

FOR CREATING A CONVERSATION COVENANT

God is calling us to talk together as God's people in a way that will allow us to share perspectives, receive new facts, come away with fresh insights, and consider what we might do together as God's people.

A group covenant exercise:

With God's help,

I will listen respectfully and carefully to others.

I will seek to recognize the Holy Spirit's presence here.

I will remember that I must speak only for myself.

I will maintain confidentiality.

I will keep an open mind and heart.

I will share responsibility for this sacred process.

I will keep in mind God's people whom we are serving.

Amen.

(Participants may turn to a neighbor and make the sign of the cross on their forehead and share a sign of Christ's peace.)

Looking ahead: What other modules could your group discuss?

Module 2: What problems do women face, and what does justice require?

Module 3: How is sexism personal, and how are we the body of Christ together?

Module 4: What does economic sexism look like, and how can we seek equity for all?

Module 5: How can we address violence against women and girls?

Module 6: Why do images and words for God matter?

Module 7: How do we challenge the misuse of Scripture against women and girls?

MODULE 2: WHAT PROBLEMS DO WOMEN FACE, AND WHAT DOES JUSTICE REQUIRE?

Materials

- Pencils
- Paper
- Whiteboard and markers
- Timer
- Candle, if using this option

How to prepare

- Distribute copies of Module 2, pencils and paper to each participant.
- Decide ahead of time which of the devotional activities you wish to use. (See Devotional Options.)
- Invite one or two participants to read the Scripture.

MODULE 3: HOW IS SEXISM PERSONAL, AND HOW ARE WE THE BODY OF CHRIST TOGETHER?

Materials

- Pencils
- Paper
- Markers
- Tape
- Whiteboard and markers
- Timer
- Candle, if using this option

How to prepare

- Distribute copies of Module 3, pencils and paper to each participant.
- Decide ahead of time which of the devotional activities you wish to use. (See Devotional Options.)
- Pick a wall where you will create a cross.
- Invite one or two participants to read the Scripture.

MODULE 4: WHAT DOES ECONOMIC SEXISM LOOK LIKE, AND HOW CAN WE SEEK EQUITY FOR ALL?

Materials

- Handouts
- Pencils
- Paper
- Markers
- Timer
- Craft clay
- Large paper
- Markers and maybe crayons (continued)

- Tape
- Whiteboard and markers
- M&Ms, if you will use this optional activity
- Candle, if using this option

How to prepare

- Distribute copies of Module 4, pencils and paper to each participant.
- Decide ahead of time which of the devotional activities you wish to use. (See Devotional Options.)
- Invite one or two participants to read the Scripture.
- Decide which of the reflection activities you will use and be sure you have the materials.
- Count out M&Ms in advance, if using this activity.

MODULE 5: HOW CAN WE ADDRESS VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS?

Materials

- Pencils
- Paper
- Whiteboard and markers
- Timer
- Candle, if using this option

How to prepare

- Distribute copies of Module 5, pencils and paper to each participant.
- Decide ahead of time which of the devotional activities you wish to use. (See Devotional Options.)
- Invite one or two participants to read the Scripture.

MODULE 6: WHY DO WORDS AND IMAGES FOR GOD MATTER?

Materials

- Pencils
- Timer
- Whiteboard and markers
- Candle, if using this option
- Paper
- Technology to project the art slides, if available

How to prepare

- Distribute copies of Module 6, pencils and paper to each participant.
- Identify the location of the art images at the end of the module or online.

- Decide ahead of time which of the devotional activities you wish to use. (See Devotional Options.)
- Invite one or two participants to read the Scripture.
- Review the images that you will show during this module. Make sure your technology works or have color copies ready.

A note about how to lead this session

The main focus of this session is to open up experiences and discussion on the diversity and complexity of Christian language and imagery for God. There are instructions on how many minutes to spend on each section, and you are encouraged to say at the beginning of the session that you will be mindful of the clock so that participants can get a taste of everything. Participants may choose to return at later times to discuss things they thought were interesting. Encourage them to keep track of topics to which return.

These are notes for the images in the session.**Image 1**

"The Way of the Cross" by Ettore De Grazia is a contemporary piece. Notice how the gender and sex of Jesus Christ are not evident, but there is still clear reference to physical embodiment.

Image 2

At first glance Alexandre Hogue's painting appears not to include a body – until one remembers that Jesus was a human or "earth creature" (adam) formed of the earth (adamah), and then recognizes that this picture links the crucifixion of the one body of earth to the other. (See Genesis 2:7.)

Image 3

This is a mosaic of a mother hen, depicted at Dominus Flevit Roman Catholic Church in Jerusalem.

Image 4

Here the resurrected Jesus Christ is depicted as an American Indian chief. Notice how many of the artists in the series have painted in such a way to see themselves in Jesus. Are there other ways that people appropriate sacred imagery in this way?

Image 5

How often have you seen Jesus depicted as the woman searching for the lost coin? Many churches have stained glass windows of Jesus as a shepherd. An ELCA congregation in Anna, Ohio, has this window!

Image 6

This piece has been named "Jesus on Cross;" it is in the Tatlarin Church in Goreme, Turkey. What is remarkable is that it is from the 11th century. It depicts Jesus Christ on the cross with a bleeding breast. Quite often, when women nurse babies, their nipples do bleed. Theologically, what is communicated in this image is that Jesus feeds and sustains the Church with flesh. In this image, the blood is coming from the breast, whereas in the next one, the blood is coming from the wound the Roman centurion made in Jesus' side.

Image 7

Five hundred years later, in a different part of the world, a similar message is given in this painting. "The Man of Sorrows," by Jacob Cornelisz, which he painted around 1510. Notice how the wound in Jesus' side is quite close to his breast and that he is cupping his hand under the wound in order to extract blood for the Eucharist. Women who nurse babies cup their hands in the same way under their breasts so that the milk flows freely to the baby about to latch on. This tenderness in the painting is remarkable. Theologically, just like the last painting, Jesus Christ is depicted as the one who feeds and sustains the Church through the flesh. For more, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

Image 8

This is an illustration from a French Moralized Bible, 1240. One medieval scholar writes: "Using the inversion so common in medieval religious imagery, artists depicted Christ as a mother giving birth to Church on the cross, and drew a parallel to the birth of Eve from Adam's side" (Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 99). Notice that the baby (the Church) is being born out of Christ's wounded side.

Image 9

This sculpture is most likely from Cologne or the Upper Rhine Valley, Germany, sometime between 1000-1050. It is made of oak and is quite large, measuring at 128 x 90 x 18 cm. There are remnants of painting decoration, a blue robe to signify the incarnation and red blood. Formerly it was used as a custodial (a vessel to hold consecrated Eucharist wafers). The case in Jesus' chest was locked by a mountain crystal (German diamond). Both the relic and the crystal are lost today. It was found in an attic in Birkenbrinhausen in Hesse in the 1930s. Again, theologically, Jesus Christ is shown to be both the source of the Church and the sustainer of the Church.

Image 10

This painting also appears to depict Jesus Christ as pregnant, but rather than crucified, Christ is here seemingly in a tomb or womb prior to resurrection. It hangs above the altar of the house chapel in the Russian Bishop's House in Sitka, Alaska, the former seat of Russian Orthodoxy this side of the Pacific until 1969. Although this site is now part of the U.S. National Park system, the Chapel of the Annunciation is still a consecrated site. The painting is from perhaps mid-19th century.

MODULE 7: HOW DO WE CHALLENGE THE MISUSE OF SCRIPTURE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS?

Materials

- Pencils
- Paper
- Whiteboard and markers
- Timer
- Candle, if using this option

How to prepare

- Distribute copies of Module 7, pencils and paper to each participant.
- Decide ahead of time which of the devotional activities you wish to use. (See Devotional Options.)
- Invite one or two participants to read the Scripture.

Prayers and spiritual activities are critically important in setting the context for Christian conversation. They claim the biblical promise that wherever two or three are gathered in Jesus' name, the Spirit will be present. They help create the appropriate "space" for study and sharing. This study offers two models and sets of material for opening and closing. Both have been used by the ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ. Leaders can choose what is most fitting for the situation, which might vary from module to module. For each session, you may wish to light a candle symbolizing God's presence with us at all times and in all places.

OPTION 1: CENTERING PRAYER AND HEART PRAYER

Mindful breathing and centering prayer are Christian practices that will create a respectful space for groups to notice how God is present throughout your time of study. For closing, the Heart prayer (a modified ancient practice, often called *spiritual examen*) is used as a way to pray the prayers of our heart and minds that arise from study.

Opening centering prayer (5 minutes)

1. Introduce the practice of mindful breathing and centering prayer. The goal of such prayer is to emphasize openness to or awareness of the presence of God's Spirit in the immediate moment rather than to emphasize words spoken to God. Centering prayer builds on the practice of mindful breathing, in which a word or image is used to focus the attention away from distractions and help a person move deeper into a practice of intentional, quiet prayer. As you introduce the practice, you should also introduce the suggested centering word for the session (just below).
2. Use the following script as entry into the practice of mindful breathing and centering prayer. If you are already familiar with this practice, feel free to use words that are comfortable for you. It may be helpful to set a gentle timer for the time you are committing to this prayer practice. Once the timer sounds, invite the participants to slowly open their eyes and gently move arms and feet as they return to the present moment.

Script:

Leader: "Find a relaxed position ... gently close your eyes ... put both feet on the floor (as you are able) ... open your hands. Once you find a relaxed position take three normal breaths ... try to notice the complete cycle of your breath as it moves into and out of your body ... then, as you continue to notice your breath, we will move into a time of centering prayer ...

“With each breath lift up to God the centering word for this session ... today the word is [insert word here]

Module 1 – Listen

Module 5 – Healing

Module 2 – Justice

Module 6 – Spirit

Module 3 – Freedom

Module 7 – Hope

Module 4 – Companion

With each breath, repeat this word gently ... if your mind wanders, try to come back to the centering word ... if another word seems to work better for you, follow that word ... the only goal is to become aware of God's presence in this moment, following the inward and outward cycle of your breath ... continue breathing and praying until you hear the timer ... once you hear the timer, you can gently return your attention to the activity in this room.”

3. As an advance note, encourage members of the group to keep a list of things that arise from the conversation during the rest of the time together that may be places where we need to be in corporate prayer. Those notes may be shared in prayer at the end of the session.

In closing: heart prayer (5 minutes)

This is a way to practice noticing and reflecting on the prayers of the heart.

1. The leader may say these or similar words:

“Place your hand on your heart and both feet on the floor, as you are able, as a posture of prayer. Begin to think about the conversation in this session of the study. Before we move into a time of individual and quiet prayer, I invite you to share any things you have noticed that we should hold to God in corporate prayer that were part of our conversation today. [Leave silence for folks to share things they noted.]

“Now we move into a time of heart prayer. As your hand remains on your heart, I invite you into conversation with God.

“Notice something that is troubling to you, perhaps a place of lament, and hold that in prayer to God. [pause, silently count three breaths]

“Now, notice a place of freedom and hold that to God. [pause, silently count five breaths]

“Notice where you were pushed to grow and think about something in a new way. Hold that to God. [pause, silently count five breaths]

“Notice and name an indication of hope as you move forward in learning and growing. Hold that to God. [pause, silently count five breaths]

“All our prayers we offer to your transformative grace, O God. Amen.”

OPTION 2: PREPARED PRAYERS

Opening prayer (1 minute)

Module 1

Fountain of Wisdom, thank you for meeting us in the desert of our hearts. Help us notice the ways your wisdom gives life like water in a parched land. Open our hearts, minds and spirit to your teaching. Amen.

Module 2

My Rock, I surrender my heart to you. When my understanding of truth is shaken, root me in the solid rock of your justice. Amen.

Module 3

Weaver of All, thank you for the bold patterns of life. Give us courage to name our place in the conversation. Help us trust that it is all held by you. Amen.

Module 4

Creator God, free us from fear. Help us hear your invitation to abundant life. Empower us to pray, live and work on behalf of the neighbor in our homes, our jobs and in your creation. Amen.

Module 5

Most Faithful Companion, thank you for walking with us on our road. Help us notice you in the people who journey with us in this life. Sustain us for the work that waits. Amen.

Module 6

Most Gracious God, we call your name. We yearn to know you even as we are fully known. Comfort and nourish us through Jesus Christ. Sustain us by your Spirit. Amen.

Module 7

Loving Savior, Jesus Christ, come to us with your abundant grace. Work in our hearts and minds, freeing us from the sin that would obstruct your mercy. Strengthen us that we may willingly bear your redeeming love to all the world. This we pray in the name of the Triune God, who creates, redeems and sustains us. Amen.

(Note: This prayer is inspired by the Prayer of the Day for the Fourth Sunday of Advent of Lectionary Year B 2014/2015 using the Revised Common Lectionary as it appears in Evangelical Lutheran Worship (2006). It is repeated at the end of the module.)

Closing prayer (1 minute)

Module 1

Story Teller, feed our imagination. Open our ears to hear you in the story of the “other,” as we grow to recognize the neighbor’s story as our own. Amen.

Module 2

Restorer God, we are a broken people. Teach us to be co-creators in the work of peace and love for neighbor and self. We pray all those who feel unloved and broken will hear your voice and call on your holy name. Amen.

Module 3

Gardener of Grace, till the soil of our minds. Plant seeds of new ways of being deep within. Cultivate the garden of change. Amen.

Module 4

Compassionate Teacher, open our eyes. Help us notice when we fail to treat others as equals and participate in unjust systems of oppression. Forgive us and empower us to live and act from a heart of justice. Amen.

Module 5

Great Healer, we pray for courage and guidance. Heal us with your peace and make us new. Open the eyes of our heart to see you in the faces of victims and survivors of gender-based violence. Help us be with one another in precious places of healing. Give all strength for the journey. Amen.

Module 6

Seer of All, there is nowhere we can hide from your truth. Thank you for the gift of language, words and the ability to name truth. Higher than our human understanding, your promise of salvation sustains us with grace. Amen.

Module 7

Loving Savior, Jesus Christ, come to us with your abundant grace. Work in our hearts and minds, freeing us from the sin that would obstruct your mercy. Strengthen us that we may willingly bear your redeeming love to all the world. This we pray in the name of the Triune God, who creates, redeems and sustains us. Amen.