

## Personal Inventory: Inward, Outward Gifts of Discipleship

When a baptized Christian affirms the faith (often called confirmation) the presiding minister addresses those making public affirmation of baptism and asks the question: Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism:

**to live among God's faithful people,  
to hear the word of God and share in the  
Lord's supper,  
to proclaim the good news of God in Christ  
through word and deed,  
to serve all people, following the example of  
Jesus,  
and to strive for justice and peace in all the  
earth?**

RESPONSE: We do, and ask God to help and guide us.  
(*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, p. 236)

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And so begins a daily claiming and re-discovering of the God-given gifts of discipleship. These gifts overlap and are intertwined as one gift flows into another and into faithful living. But in reality,

**How do you put your faith into practice?  
How do you daily practice your faith?**

### INWARD AND OUTWARD GIFTS

The five gifts of discipleship can be divided into two categories:

#### **Inward Gifts of Discipleship: MY life is blessed!**

Live among God's faithful people  
Hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper

#### **Outward Gifts of Discipleship: MY life blesses others!**

Proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed  
Serve all people, following the example of Jesus  
Strive for justice and peace in all the earth

### DISCERNMENT: Unwrapping the Gifts of Discipleship

Gifts can be transformative and bring unexpected changes. That is especially true as we are open to God-given gifts. Where is God's Spirit leading you? How might your life please God?



## Putting MY Faith into Practice

### 10,000 Hour Rule

The 10,000 Hour Rule is a popular notion that it takes 10,000 hours of “intentional practice” to master a skill. That’s a lot of time, but any person with a skill can tell stories of the hours spent learning, making mistakes, and trying it again, until a particular skill becomes second-nature. Just watch a veteran cook move through a kitchen, measuring, stirring, sifting, seasoning, and savoring the final product.

### More than skills, we live by grace

We live by the grace of God, sealed with the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever. We do not “do” faith practices to earn an “A” in faith or to master a skill. Far from it. We do not “have to” practice our faith. There are no “oughts” in our faith response. These gifts are not laws. Instead, we respond freely to God’s love made known in Christ. Thus, we “get” to:

- Put our faith into practice
- Practice our faith daily

At all times we have opportunities to receive (inward) and reflect (outward) God’s love. Whether we are new or mature in faith, an extrovert or introvert, young or old, we are continually renewed and strengthened through the Holy Spirit to follow Christ as well as to share God’s love with others. As ambassadors of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17-20), we will at times find ourselves called to leave our comfort zone.

### GIFTS OF DISCIPLESHIP SELF-RATING (0= rarely; 10=often)

Rate yourself:

- Mark “X” on each line where you are today
- Circle the gift which is your strength (most comfortable or familiar)
- Check the gift which is your weakness (least comfortable or familiar)
- Mark “G” where you think God might be calling you

Live among God’s faithful people

0 \_\_\_\_\_ 10

Hear the word of God and share in the Lord’s supper

0 \_\_\_\_\_ 10

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

0 \_\_\_\_\_ 10

Serve all people, following the example of Jesus

0 \_\_\_\_\_ 10

Strive for peace and justice on the earth

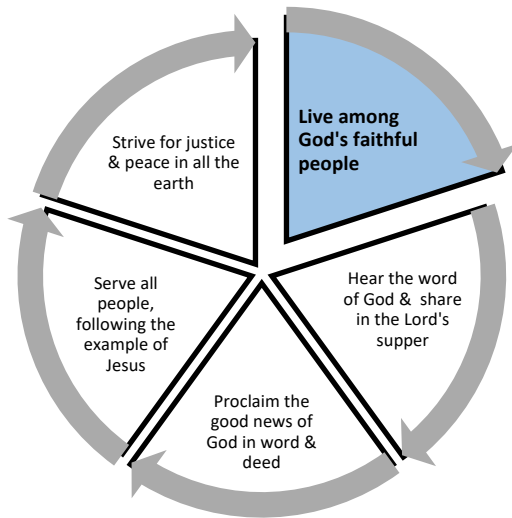
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### DISCERNMENT: Unwrapping the five gifts of discipleship

The following pages are designed for your personal reflection to assist you to unwrap the five gifts of discipleship. Take time to reflect on each gift. Be intentional and prayerful as you unwrap these God-given gifts of discipleship.

## INWARD GIFT

### HOW DO YOU: Live among God's faithful people?



They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers ... All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people.

—Acts 2:42, 44-46 NRSV

This inward gift provides community—where we can both learn about God at work in our world and practice our faith. It is impossible to find a perfect church. Instead every church is made up of sinners. Living among God's faithful people is not easy. In part, people are not always faithful to God, nor kind to each other. Left to ourselves, we tend to think of ourselves first and foremost. Nevertheless, it is among God's faithful people that we can learn from mature Christians who have faced challenges and have been tested, but yet walk by faith.

#### Reflection

1. What does it mean for you to live among God's faithful people?
2. How does living among God's faithful people support you in your journey of faith?

#### Challenge

3. Are Christians to live in isolation? What is the role of Christians in their neighborhood and community?

#### Putting Faith into Practice: Live among God's faithful people

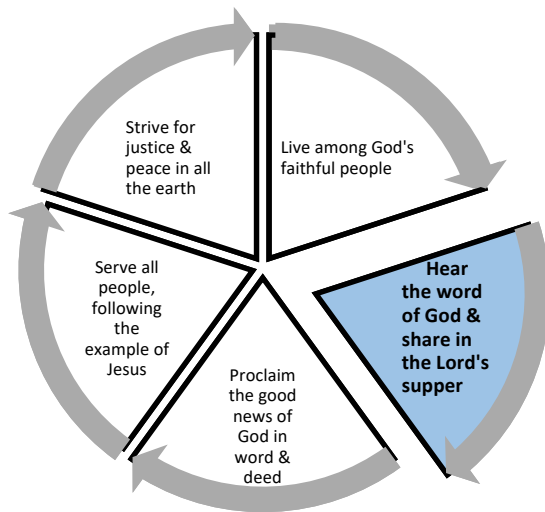
- ✓ Become active in a church—the body of Christ
  - Share life with others in the church—the joys and sorrows.
  - Support children, youth, and adults as they grow in faith—and receive support from them.
  - Offer your God-gifts to build up the body of Christ.
  - Agree and Disagree—not everyone thinks the same.
- ✓ Be open to God's faithful people beyond the walls of your church.
  - Be a good neighbor.
  - Learn more about other faith traditions.
  - Welcome the stranger and practice hospitality.

#### DISCERNMENT: Unwrapping this gift of discipleship

4. As you unwrap this gift, what discoveries have you made? Implications?

## INWARD GIFT

### HOW DO YOU: Hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper?



And he said, "Let anyone with ears to hear listen!"

– Mark 4:9 NRSV

The Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

–1 Corinthians 11:23b-26 NRSV

This inward gift clearly connects us to worship as we hear the word and share in the Lord's supper. This gift feeds and soothes our weary spirits. And yet, it is a gift easily neglected.

#### Reflection

1. Describe what happens to you as you hear the word of God.
2. Take a moment to reflect what the Lord's supper means to you.

#### Challenge

3. What can you do to better prepare yourself to hear the word of God and to receive the gift of the Lord's supper?

#### Putting Faith into Practice: Hear the word of God

- ✓ Worship and listen to the word of God through the liturgy, lectionary, sermon, and music.
- ✓ Attend a bible study with others.
- ✓ Study the bible—challenge yourself.
- ✓ Integrate daily devotions into your routine ... morning, noontime, evening ... whatever works.
- ✓ Practice Meditation.
- ✓ Seek a spiritual director to help you hear the word of God.
- ✓ Create art (and even color) as a response to the word of God.
- ✓ Walk and repeat a simple prayer or verse from scripture as you breathe—inhale and exhale.
- ✓ Attend a retreat.
- ✓ Journal.

#### Putting Faith into Practice: Share in the Lord's supper

- ✓ Arrange your schedule to receive the Lord's supper as often as you can
- ✓ Establish a pattern of preparation to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion

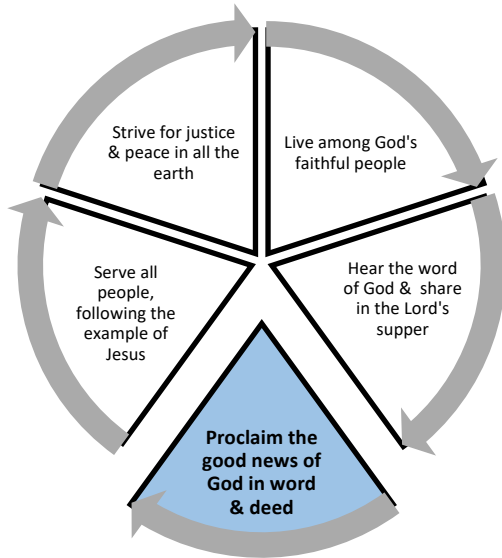
#### DISCERNMENT: Unwrapping these gifts of discipleship

4. As you unwrap these gifts, what discoveries have you made? Implications?



## OUTWARD GIFT

### HOW DO YOU: Proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed?



“You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

—Matthew 5:14-16 NRSV

But in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you.

—1 Peter 3:15 NRSV

This outward gift shifts our awareness to the possibility of us being a gift to the world. The image of followers of Christ being light to the world is powerful. With our own eyes, we have seen how a single lamp can light up and transform an entire room. We also know how easy it is to take our light and hide it under a bushel basket.

#### Reflection

1. What does it mean for you to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed?
2. How does the light of Christ shine through you?

#### Challenge

3. What is preventing you from proclaiming the good news of God in Christ?

#### Putting Faith into Practice: Proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed

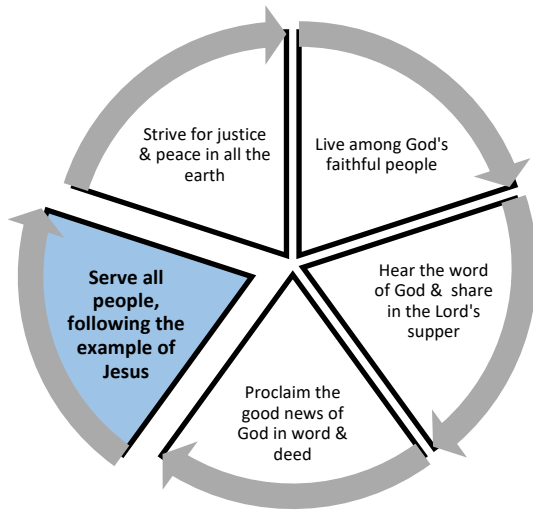
- ✓ Practice
  - Find someone to practice talking about Jesus and your faith.
  - Prepare your response to someone who asks you to defend the hope which is in you.
- ✓ Pray
  - For those who are waiting for you to share the good news of God in Christ.
  - For courage to find the words needed to share good news with others.
  - For joy to tell others the good news of God in Christ
- ✓ Plant seeds of love through your deeds
  - Scatter acts of kindness and words of grace.
  - Harvest good will.

#### DISCERNMENT: Unwrapping this gift of discipleship

4. As you unwrap this gift, what discoveries have you made? Implications?

## OUTWARD GIFT

### HOW DO YOU: Serve all people, following the example of Jesus?



[Jesus] got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him...

So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.

—John 13:4-5, 14-15 NRSV

This outward gift challenges us to be like Jesus—to follow his example of sharing compassion and serving people. It begins with seeing each person as Jesus does—as a child of God, created in God's own image. Jesus embodies humility as he kneels and washes the feet of his students. He takes on the role of a servant and sets an example for us.

#### Reflection

1. What does it mean for you to serve others following the example of Jesus?
2. Give example of someone who served you—who washed your feet.

#### Challenge

3. Reflect on the phrase "all people" and ponder who that might include in your community. Whom are the ones which you find challenging to serve?

#### Putting Faith into Practice: Serve all people, following the example of Jesus

- ✓ Begin with those nearest to you—family and friends
  - How do you serve your family and friends?
  - What qualities of Jesus do you hope your family and friends see in you?
- ✓ Take time to be a better neighbor
  - What neighbor needs your assistance?
  - How might you encourage the children in the neighborhood to make wise choices?
- ✓ Engage in community service
  - What needs do you see in your community?
  - How might you increase your involvement with agencies making a difference?
  - How do you reflect Jesus in your community?
- ✓ Serve all people
  - Whom are you being called to serve?

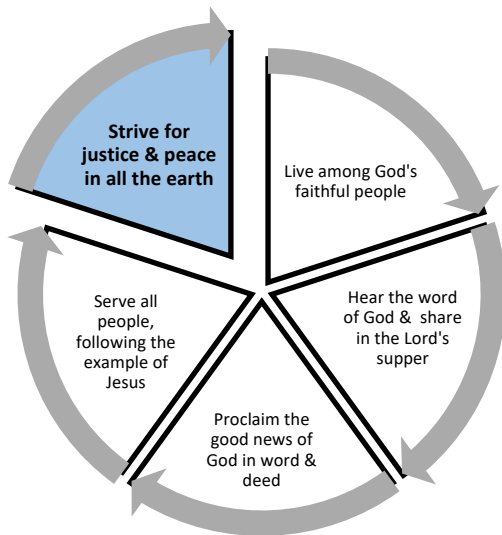
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## OUTWARD GIFT

### HOW DO I: Strive for justice and peace in all the earth?



Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?'

Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.'

-Matthew 25:42-45 NRSV

What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

-Micah 6:8 NRSV

The haunting words of Jesus are deeply personal. "For I was hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick ... and you did nothing." Once our hearts, ears, and eyes are open to his piercing cry, we are not the same. In this outward gift, we join the prophets of old and all who work for justice and peace.

#### Reflection

1. What does it mean for you to strive for justice?
2. What does it mean for you to strive for peace?

#### Challenge

3. Change is not easy. The challenge is not to go alone. With whom can you work together to strive for justice and peace?

#### Putting Faith into Practice: Strive for justice and peace in all the earth

- ✓ Peace begins with me
  - Consider first your own personal life. How might peace begin with you?
  - With whom do you need to make peace? Yourself, others, God?
- ✓ Consider your friends
  - Do your friends treat others with respect? If not, how might you respond?
  - How do you strive for justice and peace among your friends?
- ✓ Consider your work place, school, and community
  - Where do you see injustice or inequity?
  - How might your voice bring change?
  - Who is organizing change in your community?

#### DISCERNMENT: Unwrapping the Gifts of Discipleship

5. As you unwrap this gift, what discoveries have you made? Implications?



## UNWRAPPING THE GIFTS OF DISCIPLESHIP

Gifts can be transformative and bring unexpected changes. That is especially true as we are open to God-given gifts.

### GIFTS OF DISCIPLESHIP SELF-RATING #2 (0= rarely; 10=often)

Rate yourself again. Note any changes from the first time you rated yourself.

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Live among God's faithful people

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

0 \_\_\_\_\_ 10

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

0 \_\_\_\_\_ 10

Serve all people, following the example of Jesus

0 \_\_\_\_\_ 10

Strive for peace and justice on the earth

0 \_\_\_\_\_ 10

### Next Steps

Take time to reflect on what you have learned about you and God's calling to you at this time in your life.

1. Where is God's Spirit leading you?
2. What, if anything, are you being asked to leave behind?
3. What, if anything, are you being asked to embrace?
4. What changes do you want to make in your life?
5. What do you want to say to God?