

Summary of *Story Matters: Claiming Our Biblical Identity for the Sake of the World*

Story Matters is a new ELCA resource (currently in a pilot phase in a number of congregations) designed by folks involved with Faith Practices, the Book of Faith Initiative, and Mission Development.

Goal:

To help congregations discover and articulate, in a deep and biblically based conversation, their unique identity and mission so that that each congregation might:

- Discern their congregational story
- Explore and live into their story
- Deepen their faith by living into their baptismal promises
- Engage together in missional planning
- Be challenged by this engagement to live out their mission

The Proposal:

Congregations are invited to participate in a conversation that centers on the biblical story that they identify for themselves as their defining story.

(A biblical story, broadly understood, might be any biblical passage – a parable, a psalm, a set of verses, a book, a narrated event, or any well defined passage.)

Members of a congregation will discover and explore this story together. Through the process of naming and exploring this story they will ask questions about their own stories as a congregation and a community. Extensive engagement with their chosen passage will help the congregation to form their identity as a missional community, to deepen their practice of faith, and to live out their specific vocation as a called and sent community of disciples.

Three defining invitations and questions will guide this conversation:

- Discover and Name Our Biblical Story: What biblical story best captures our own stories of who we are and who God is calling us to be?
- Explore and Live into Our Biblical Story: How might our biblical story gather us together and help to form us as a community of disciples?
- Live Out of our Biblical Story: How is God calling us through our biblical story into mission in God's world?

Step One: Discover and Name Our Biblical Story

Gather the community and claim a defining biblical story.

The goal of this step is to help the gathered members of the congregation to identify and claim a story from the Bible that best expresses the identity and commitments of the congregation. That is, the goal is to discover a biblical story that both tells your congregational story and informs your congregational commitments and calling.

Step Two: Explore Our Story

Gather around and live deeply into your defining biblical story. Put your story at the center of your ongoing conversation. Discover the grace of dwelling richly in one story over time.

The goal of this step is to take extended time, as much as a year, to gather around and live deeply into your defining story. Journey with your chosen story allowing it to seep into the community and come alive.

Step Three: Live Our Story

Explore ways to live out of your story.

The goal of this step is to follow the call of your biblical story, to let your story inform how you listen and speak to as well as act with and for your community both near and far.

An initial guide to *Story Matters* will be available by November 2012 at www.bookoffaith.org and the upcoming Faith Practices page at <http://www.elca.org>.