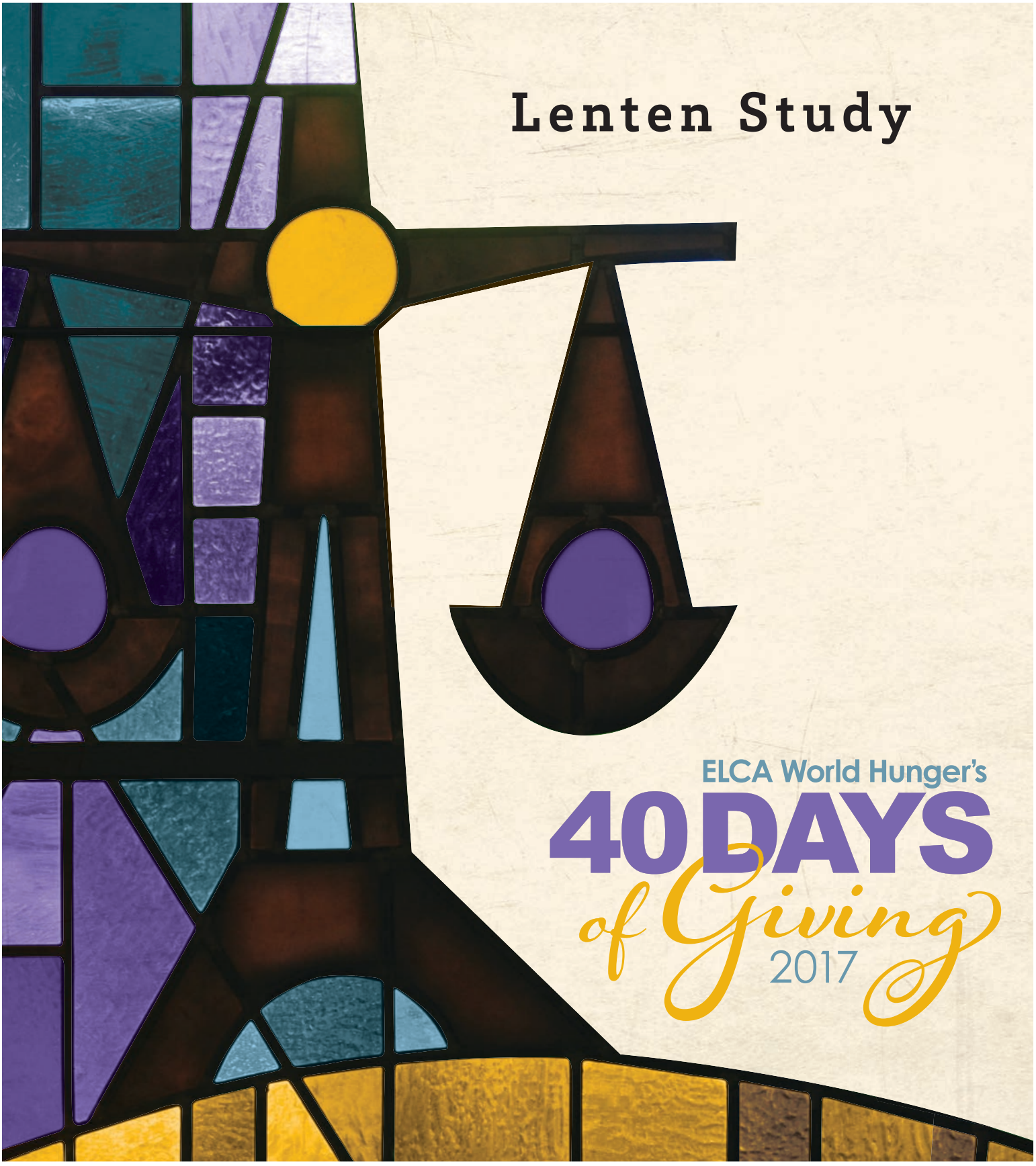


Lenten Study

ELCA World Hunger's

40 DAYS of Giving

2017

ELCA World Hunger
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Dear Friend in Christ,

Lent is an important season for the people of God. It is a time to reflect on Christ's temptation in the wilderness, his loneliness in the Garden of Gethsemane, his death on the cross, and our own dependence on God's grace and mercy. The promise of Easter leads us through our own wilderness in this season of confession, repentance and, for many, fasting.

Through the prophet Isaiah, God reveals to us the depth and breadth of authentic fasting in the reading for Ash Wednesday: "Is not this the fast I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?" (Isaiah 58:6). In that same chapter, God reveals the hypocrisy of a people who would fast while practicing injustice: "Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers" (Isaiah 58:3).

The connection between faith, worship and justice was central for Martin Luther. His concern for the poor and his sharp rebuke of economic injustice helps us today see the many ways our faith calls us to strive for justice in our world. In this, the 500th year since the Reformation, Luther's call for economic justice is more pressing than ever.

This five-session study guide is designed for use by your congregation during Lent. In it, you will find sessions based on themes related to economic justice and faith, with ties to both Scripture and our Lutheran heritage. Each study session also includes a short section to help you connect the lessons in the study to the lectionary readings for that week (based on the Revised Common Lectionary). The sessions are intended for a multi-generational audience, from confirmation-age youth to adults. For younger children and families, there is a set of age-appropriate lessons at the end based on themes drawn from the study.

Every congregation is different, so we invite you to adapt this study to fit your needs. If you find there is more in each session than your time permits, feel free to divide each session in to smaller pieces. If your congregation is eager for more on economic justice and Lutheran faith, visit vimeo.com/album/4043021 to find videos from the "Forgotten Luther" conference and book.

We pray for blessings as you and your congregation take a closer look at our Lutheran perspective on the economy and as we together affirm our baptismal vocation "to strive for justice and peace in all the earth."

In peace,

ELCA World Hunger

ELCA World Hunger
Session One: A 'Household' Economy

KEY LESSONS

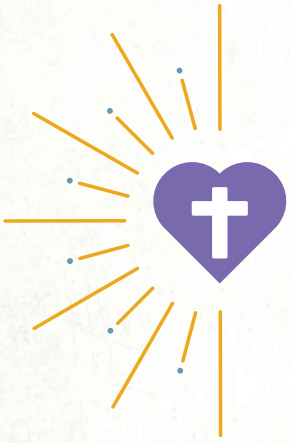
The economy is the pattern of relationships, processes, institutions and regulations, together with the values underlying them, by which the activities of production, distribution and consumption are carried out in and among societies and cultures.

What is an economy?

How can an economy affect hunger in a community?

MATERIALS NEEDED FOR LESSON:

- ☐ Board or large piece of paper to write on
- ☐ Marker to write with
- ☐ Projector, monitor or TV to watch video



Over the next five weeks, we will uncover how our Lutheran faith shapes our perspective and role in the economy. Each week, we will look at one key aspect of the economy and explore questions related to economic justice. As you journey through this study, we encourage you and your congregation to use ELCA World Hunger's "40 Days of Giving" daily devotional calendar to reflect on economics, hunger, hope and faith throughout the weeks of Lent. We also encourage you to look for other resources on economic life, especially the ELCA's social statement on economic life, "Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All."

INSTRUCTIONS FOR LEADER

Welcome the participants to the session. This first week, you may want to read the paragraph above out loud so that participants are familiar with the topic. Feel free to adapt the lessons and activities each week to suit the needs of your congregation or group.

PRAY OR INVITE SOMEONE TO PRAY

Loving God, in this season of Lent, you invite us to reflect on our need for your grace as we long for the Easter to come. As you walk with us this season, grant us sight to see the brokenness of our communities and our economy; grant us courage to work together for a just world in which all are fed and grant us hope in your promises for today and for the world to come. In the name of Jesus Christ, our crucified and risen Savior. Amen.

READ OR INVITE SOMEONE TO READ

What is an economy? What images come to mind when you hear the word "economy" or "economics"? (Allow a moment for silent reflection or take a minute to hear answers from the group.) The word "economy" comes from the ancient Greek word "oikonomia" which literally means "management of the household" (from the two words, oikos = household; and nomos = law, rule, or management). It was closely tied to the role of a steward or manager over someone's household and property.

For the church, "oikonomia" had a broad meaning and included especially the ways in which God ordered the whole world and all of history. The term also was used to refer to the whole inhabited world as one "household." Starting with the Greek word "oikonomia" is helpful for two reasons. First, thinking of the world as a "household" lifts up the ways we are connected to each other. Second, "oikonomia" implies a form of stewardship, a way of managing resources that ultimately are not our own. For Lutherans, this is a key way to think about all the good things we enjoy in our world. These are gifts, given to us in trust by God to ensure our shared well-being.

CONNECT TO THE READINGS

In the Scripture readings for the first Sunday in Lent, we hear of the Garden of Eden, a bountiful paradise where all the first humans' needs could be met with ease (Genesis 2:15-17). We also hear of the fall and their journey out of the garden and into a world of naked vulnerability (Genesis 3:1-7). Yet, even after sin enters the world, God does not abandon us. We may not be able to merely pluck from the garden to fill our needs, but as we will learn this week, God creates community among humans and all creation to ensure that our needs will still be met – through an economy.

THE HOUSEHOLD ECONOMY

On a board or piece of paper, draw a picture of a house. Leave space at the margins to write. As people respond to the questions below, write their answers around the picture of the house.

Ask

What resources do we have in our household? What things do we have at home that we need to survive? What things do we have at home that help us find enjoyment?
(Some suggestions: food, clothing, entertainment options, beds, etc. If someone mentions the people in the household as a "resource," write this down and underline it. We'll come back to this later.)

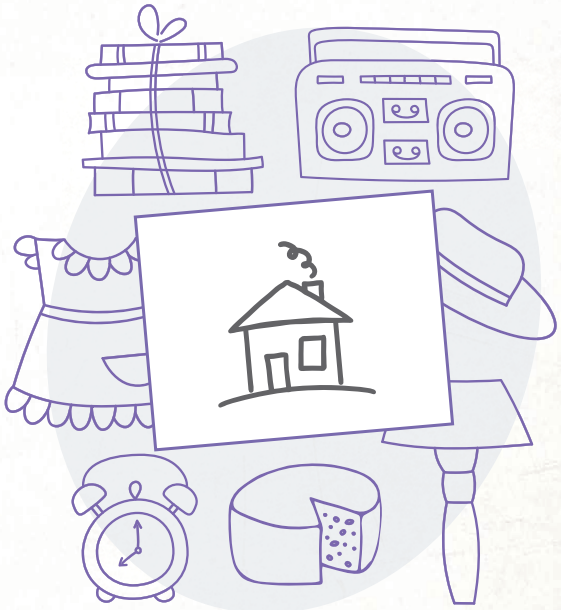
How do we use these things?
Who gets to use them or enjoy them?
(Look for answers: everyone!)

What things do we have that are our own, even in our household? Are there things that only certain household members can use or enjoy? (Look for answers: toys, certain books, special items)

What if someone in our household really needed something, like clothes or food?
(Look for answer: We would share it with them.)

In a healthy and safe household, every member is able to use the things they need to live – food, clothing, heat, electricity and water, for example. The goal of a household is to make sure everyone is healthy, safe and happy. Even if a household is lacking something – for example, if a family doesn't have enough food to eat – most households still try to work together and share their resources, rather than compete with each other for what they have.

A household is one way to understand how we relate to other people and to physical things that we have. These relationships – especially how we make, distribute and use our resources – are part of what we call "an economy."



The economy is the pattern of relationships, processes, institutions and regulations, together with the values underlying them, by which the activities of production, distribution and consumption are carried out in and among societies and cultures.
(from "Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread: Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All, A Study on Economic Life," 1996).

Martin Luther believed that the household and the economy were created by God as ways to help all people enjoy the gifts of God's good creation.

ABUNDANCE AND SCARCITY

How we see the economy depends a lot on whether we think there is scarcity or abundance. Scarcity means there are not enough resources for everyone to use and enjoy at the same time. Abundance means there are more than enough resources for everyone to use and enjoy. As Lutherans, we believe that "God has created a world of sufficiency for all, providing us daily and abundantly with all the necessities of life."[1] However, not everyone experiences a world of abundance. News stories about hunger and poverty can make it seem as if we live in a world of scarcity rather than abundance.

On one sheet of posterboard (or on one side of a board) write: SCARCITY. On another sheet of posterboard (or the other side of the board) write ABUNDANCE. Say: Let's use food as an example.

Ask How would we act if we thought there wasn't enough food for everyone? How might we treat each other if we believed that there wasn't enough food for everyone to eat? (Write answers under SCARCITY.)

Ask How would we act if we thought that there was plenty of food for everyone? How might we treat each other if we believed that there was more than enough food for everyone to eat their fill? (Write answers under ABUNDANCE.)

When it comes to hunger, we often start with a picture of scarcity – a famine in a remote country or an empty cupboard in our home. But as people of faith, we know that God provides for our every need, our "daily bread." We know, for instance, that the world produces enough food for every person to have more than 2,700 calories per day.[2]

If that is true, why are there nearly 800 million people around the world who are hungry?

Some reasons:

- Lack of income to buy food
- Lack of land to grow their own food
- Lack of access to markets to purchase food or sell food
- Food waste and loss

The economy can affect how people get access to food. When incomes are low or when people have no income, they can't afford to purchase food. When land is not owned, or is damaged by harmful environmental practices, farmers may not be able to grow enough food for their families. In remote areas, transportation may make it difficult to get to a market to sell goods or to purchase food. In many cases, food that could be eaten is lost or wasted before it ever reaches a table.[3] We'll look at some of these effects in later weeks.

Access is a key benefit of the economy. In a well-run economy, every member of a community has access to the goods necessary to live. The "market," where things are bought and sold, ideally allows everyone to participate and benefit from the economy. Unfortunately, that is not always true. When we see the world as a place of scarcity, the market can become a place of competition and selfishness, where each of us thinks only of ourselves.

[1] "Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All" (1999), p. 10.
[2] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, http://www.fao.org/docrep/x0262e/x0262e05.htm.
[3] The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations estimates that more than 1.3 billion TONS of food are lost or wasted every year. See http://www.fao.org/food-loss-and-food-waste/en/.

Martin Luther saw this, too. In his day, high prices and low incomes made it hard for families to buy the things they needed. Luther criticized merchants who were greedy and took advantage of people who were in poverty. He believed that greed came from a belief that all people were competing over resources like wealth. In the Large Catechism, he wrote:

> *Daily the poor are defrauded. New burdens and high prices are imposed. Everyone misuses the market in his own willful, conceited, arrogant way, as if it were his right and privilege to sell his goods as dearly as he pleases without a word of criticism.*[4]

If Luther sounds angry, he was! He believed that God had provided enough for everyone and that the market was God's gift to humans to help them organize a way to make sure everyone had access to what they needed to live. When people act out of greed – whether they are selling goods at too high of a price or trying to acquire everything for themselves without thinking of their neighbors – the market becomes a frustrating, harmful place, rather than a sign of God's grace and abundance.

Think back to our image of the household. How would a household function if each member only tried to meet their own needs without thinking of each other?

MORE THAN FOOD

Of course, the economy helps us get more than food. The things we produce – from food to shoes to new technology – are examples of the creative and productive gifts God gives to each person. An economy describes how, and if, we can enjoy all of these gifts. Some of these things can be important to a healthy life. But again, not everyone has access to the goods available to others. For people in developed countries, safe and efficient technology can seem commonplace. But in developing countries, gaining access to these same items can be life-changing. In the following story, a community in the Madhya Pradesh state in India, through the support of ELCA World Hunger and Padhar Hospital, the ELCA's local partner, will gain access to safe, efficient cookstoves. These new cookstoves will help replace traditional wood-burning stoves, which can cause a variety of health problems, such as pneumonia, heart disease and eye infections. The health problems are so severe that the World Health Organization estimates that indoor air pollution from traditional cookstoves contributes to more than 4 million deaths each year.[5]

Watch the video

Download Saroj's Story at **ELCA.org/Hunger/Resources** under the "Stories and Videos" tab or watch at **Vimeo.com/channels/elcaworldhunger**.

While this is a project that seems to focus on health, it also is about economics. The new stoves will reduce the families' risk to health, while at the same time helping a community participate in the economy in a fair way. Wealthier communities have been able to find efficient and safe technology on store shelves for many years. But for people like Saroj, these new products are not always available. Because of this, Saroj's community is vulnerable to

[4] Reflection on the Seventh Commandment, Martin Luther, Large Catechism.
[5] World Health Organization (2016). "Household Air Pollution and Health," available at http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs292/en/.

health problems in ways that many other communities are not. These health problems can make it difficult for people to work and earn money to feed their families. This can create a cycle of hunger. (See graphic below.) The Tripti Project will help break this cycle, allowing Saroj and her neighbors to benefit from the economy (by getting new stoves) and contribute to the economy (by being healthy enough to work). By helping people gain access to a safe alternative to wood-burning stoves, the project will transform how the people participate in and benefit from the local economy.

A CYCLE OF HUNGER

A NEW CYCLE OF WELL-BEING

RETHINKING THE ECONOMY

The relationships, practices and policies that are part of an economy can help everyone enjoy the gifts of God when the economy is functioning well. But when human sin, especially the belief that our world is a place of scarcity, makes us compete with one another, we can often lose sight of the abundance of God's household. In the weeks to come, we will look more closely at how our faith helps us see the economy for what God calls it to be – a way for all of us to survive and thrive.

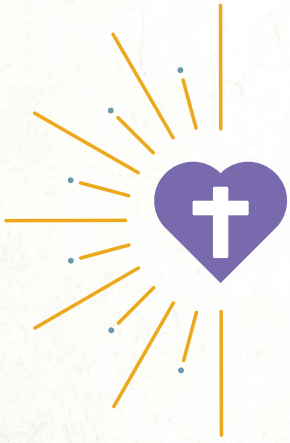
PRAY

Gracious God, you provide for our every need abundantly. Forgive us for our lack of faith in your abundance, for those times when we have hoarded instead of shared, despaired instead of trusted, and held tight instead of stewarded your gifts. Cleanse us from the greed that blinds us to each other's need and to your grace. Grant us faith to trust in your care for our world and help us grow as stewards of your goodness. In your gracious name, we pray. Amen.

ELCA World Hunger
Session Two: An Economy of Grace

KEY LESSONS

- A well-organized economy allows everyone to participate and benefit.
- The biblical witness calls us to special protections for people who are economically vulnerable.



Over the next few weeks, we will uncover how our Lutheran faith shapes our perspective and role in the economy. Each week, we will look at one key aspect of the economy and explore questions related to economic justice. As you journey through this study, we encourage you and your congregation to use ELCA World Hunger's "40 Days of Giving" daily devotional calendar to reflect on economics, hunger, hope and faith throughout the weeks of Lent. We also encourage you to look for other resources on economic life, especially the ELCA's social statement on economic life, "Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All."

INSTRUCTIONS FOR LEADER

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PRAY OR INVITE SOMEONE TO PRAY

Loving God, in this season of Lent, you invite us to reflect on our need for your grace as we long for the Easter to come. As you walk with us this season, grant us sight to see the brokenness of our communities and our economy; grant us courage to work together for a just world in which all are fed, and grant us hope in your promises for today and for the world to come. In the name of Jesus Christ, our crucified and risen Savior. Amen.

READ OR INVITE SOMEONE TO READ

Last week, we learned that one way to understand the economy is as a household. We also learned that our faith calls us to see the economy through the lens of God's abundant gifts to God's creation and how this is different from a view of the economy based on scarcity. This week, we will be looking more closely at the difference between an *economy of grace and an economy of merit.*

On Oct. 31, 1517, a young monk named Martin Luther sent the Archbishop of Mainz (Germany) a list of disagreements he had with the Catholic Church about a particular, popular practice: the selling of indulgences.

Luther believed that grace was a free gift from God, not something that could be earned by humans. He believed the church should teach people that God forgives their sins because God loves them, not because they had done enough good works to earn grace or bought enough indulgences to purchase grace. His "Ninety-five Theses," the list of his disagreements, highlighted the difference between grace – a free gift – and merit – something that was earned.

CONNECT TO THE READINGS

In this week's Gospel, Jesus affirms to Nicodemus God's love for the world in the midst of its brokenness and sin. Jesus reveals that the salvation of the world will not come via the world's obedience to the law but through the love of God, its creator and redeemer. God sends the Son in love that the world might be saved. The salvation of the world – indeed, our whole existence now and our promised future – depends on the grace of a loving God, not the merit of a worthy people.

WHAT IS AN INDULGENCE?

In the medieval Catholic Church, a Christian who had died without repenting of all their sins would be in purgatory, a sort of temporary condition, in which they would undergo punishment for their sins prior to being allowed into heaven. The church, however, as the minister of God's gift of grace, could remit a Christian's sins and allow them to escape purgatory. This remission – or forgiveness – of sins was called an indulgence. Practically, it was often a piece of paper that stated that the sinner did not have to do additional penance for their sins before going to heaven. The first indulgences often involved doing something extraordinary for the good of the church, but by Luther's time, the Catholic Church had started selling indulgences, effectively creating a way to "buy" grace. It is important to remember that the Catholic Church's understanding of many of these issues today – purgatory, penance and grace – is very different than it was 500 years ago.

READ FROM PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS:

But the free gift is not like the trespass (humanity's first sin). For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. If, because of the one man's trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ (Romans 5:15–17).

LUTHER'S COMMENTARY ON PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS:

"For the righteousness of God is not acquired by means of acts frequently repeated … but it is imparted by faith, for 'He who through faith is righteous shall live' (Romans 1:17) … Therefore I wish to have the words 'without work' understood in the following manner: Not that the righteous person does nothing, but that his works do not make him righteous, rather that his righteousness creates works. For grace and faith are [present] without our works. After they have been imparted the works follow."[1]

Indulgences were based on the idea that good works could "earn" humans God's grace. But Luther, drawing on Paul, believed the opposite: Grace is given to us freely and empowers us to do good things. The Christian helps the neighbor, practices mercy and charity, and strives for justice for all people not to earn grace but because grace motivates the Christian to do these good things.

In a much broader sense, the Christian understands their whole life – indeed, the whole world – as a gift from God. Indulgences, on the other hand, were based on the belief that humans had to earn their salvation.

[1] Quoted in Samuel Torvend, "Greed Is an Unbelieving Scoundrel," in Carter Lindberg and Paul Wee, eds. The Forgotten Luther: Reclaiming the Social-Economic Dimension of the Reformation (Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2016), 28.

Ask

- What is the difference between merit and grace?
- How is having to earn salvation different from receiving salvation as a gift?
- How might seeing our whole lives as "gift" change how we act?

Luther's 95 theses were pretty clear that selling indulgences taught people wrong beliefs about God and salvation:

#32 They will be condemned eternally, together with their teachers, who believe themselves sure of their salvation because they have letters of pardon (that is, indulgences.)

#37 Every true Christian, whether living or dead, has part in all the blessings of Christ and the Church; and this is granted him by God, even without letters of pardon.

But Luther also knew that indulgences were not just theologically harmful; they were economically harmful.

Ask

- If you believed that you could purchase an indulgence to get into heaven, how much would you pay?
- What would you give to buy the indulgence? (Look for answers: a lot of money, everything a person owned, etc.)

Luther saw that preachers who sold indulgences especially tried to sell them to people who were in poverty, who barely had enough to afford food for their families. Believing that their eternal salvation, or the salvation of their dead loved ones, depended on owning an indulgence, poor peasants spent their meager money on indulgences instead of the things they needed to live each day. He also saw that people who had money spent it on indulgences rather than using it to help their neighbors in need.

From the 95 theses:

#43 Christians are to be taught that he who gives to the poor or lends to the needy does a better work than buying pardons.

#46 Christians are to be taught that unless they have more than they need, they are bound to keep back what is necessary for their own families, and by no means to squander it on pardons.

Luther didn't believe that wealthy Christians could earn salvation by giving money to people in need. Rather, he saw indulgences as the result of selfishness and greed; by focusing only on themselves and their own salvation, Christians were forgetting about their neighbors. By focusing only on "earning" salvation, people in poverty were forgetting to take care of their families. But Luther saw God's free gift of grace as helping Christians take comfort that their own salvation was secure in Christ. This meant they could focus on helping other people, without worrying about themselves. Grace frees us to love and serve our neighbors; merit makes us focus on ourselves – whether we are doing enough to earn our life with God in heaven.

Luther saw a connection between how we view God and how we act in the world, especially how we act within the economy. The Small Catechism, written by Luther to teach Christians about faith and life, opens with a letter to teachers about how to use the catechism. Even here at the start of the catechism, one of Luther's primary concerns was economic practices.

He told teachers to:

> *urge that commandment or part [of the Ten Commandments] most which suffers the greatest neglect among your people. For instance, the Seventh Commandment, concerning stealing, must be strenuously urged among mechanics and merchants, and even farmers and servants, for among these people many kinds of dishonesty and thieving prevail.*

Luther singles out some groups of people here, but the greed that he saw in Germany's economy in the 1500s was a problem for everyone. Last week, we learned that greed can be the result of the belief that our world is a place of scarcity. Luther saw greed as the result of another kind of wrong belief, too: idolatry.

Luther believed that indulgences in the church and greed in the marketplace were connected. Both were based on the belief that humans can trust something or someone other than God to save them.

He writes:

> *There are some who think that they have God and everything they need when they have money and prosperity; they trust in them so stubbornly that they care for no one else. They, too, have a god, mammon by name … on which they set their whole heart … .*
>
> *The desire for wealth clings and sticks to our nature all the way to the grave. (The Large Catechism, 1529)*

Grace turns us outward to care for other people around us. When we trust in God, we are free to love and serve others, without thinking of only our own good. But when we are turned inward toward ourselves and put our trust in ourselves, our work, or our possessions, we see other people as competitors. A focus on merit makes us selfish.

Luther saw this at work in the marketplace. He wrote,

> *The merchants have a common rule, which is their chief maxim: 'I may sell my goods as dear (that is, at as high a price as possible) as I can.' (Trade and Usury, 1524)*

This "maxim" was based on the belief that acquiring wealth for oneself, even if it is harmful to other people, is the way that the (economic) world works. Whether through indulgences or harmful practices in the marketplace, Luther believed that selfish practices in the church and the economy made people only think of themselves. When we are concerned only with our own well-being and how we can achieve it – either in our earthly lives through wealth or in the afterlife through merit – Luther believed we can't focus on what God asks of us: to love and care for each other.

- How does our behavior differ if we are focused on our own merit rather than grace?
- Are there examples from our current economy that might be similar to what Luther saw in his economy?

AN ECONOMY OF MERIT TODAY

One of the "maxims" that we often see in our economy today is that those who work hard are rewarded with wealth and success. Our ideals about the economy are based on merit. When someone faces poverty or unemployment, we often ask, "What did they do to deserve this?" Or we look for ways that they have failed to help explain their situation. When we see the economy as a system that distributes rewards (like wealth) for good behavior and punishments (like poverty) for bad behavior, we are looking through a lens of **merit.**

For Lutherans, though, God's world is not a world of merit but a world of grace. Luther saw all the things we need to live as examples of God's grace. We can see this in Luther's understanding of "daily bread":

> Give us this day our daily bread.
>
> *What does this mean?*
>
> God gives daily bread, even without our prayer, to all wicked men; but we pray in this petition that He would lead us to know it, and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.
>
> *What is meant by daily bread?*
>
> Everything that belongs to the support and wants of the body, such as meat, drink, clothing, shoes, house, homestead, field, cattle, money, goods, a pious spouse, pious children, pious servants, pious and faithful magistrates, good government, good weather, peace, health, discipline, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like." (Martin Luther, The Small Catechism, The Lord's Prayer, Fourth Petition)

For Luther and for Lutherans, God's world is a place of grace, not reward and punishment. This includes the systems God has established, including the government and the economy. This invites us to look at the economy through the lens of **grace.**

Seeing the economy through the lens of grace does not mean that we believe everything we can buy should instead be free or that we shouldn't have to work. (In Week 3, we will be looking at the importance of work in Luther's theology.) Instead, it changes our perspective on the purpose of our economic activity. Merit makes us look to ourselves and our own good. Grace helps us focus on others and the good of our whole community. The good of our whole community is sometimes called the "common good."

This is captured in the ELCA's social statement on economic life by the phrase "for all." "'For all' refers to the whole household of God – all people and creation throughout the world" ("Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All," p. 4). As a church, the ELCA calls Lutherans to "assess economic activities in terms of how they affect 'all,' especially people living in poverty" (ibid). Viewing the economy through the lens of grace challenges us to ask hard questions about the economy: How are vulnerable people protected? Does everyone have a fair opportunity to enjoy the benefits of the economy? Are things like economic risk and opportunity experienced equally by all people?

The Bible gives witness to God's special concern for people who are economically vulnerable. Read the following passages and discuss the questions that follow.

Note: You may want to divide your group into smaller groups or even pairs to discuss each verse. They can report on their discussions to the whole group after a few minutes.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- God calls the people to offer special protection to whom?
- Does the biblical writer offer a reason why the people should protect them?
- Why might these groups be of special concern to God?
- Why might they be especially vulnerable?

"You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. You shall not abuse any widow or orphan. If you do abuse them, when they cry out to me, I will surely heed their cry; my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children orphans." (Exodus 22:21-24)

"Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.' For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly act justly one with another, if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, then I will dwell with you in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your ancestors for ever and ever." (Jeremiah 7:4-7)

"The word of the Lord came to Zechariah, saying: Thus says the Lord of hosts: Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another; do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another. But they refused to listen, and turned a stubborn shoulder, and stopped their ears in order not to hear." (Zechariah 7:8-11)

"When you stretch out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow." (Isaiah 1:15-17)

READ THE FOLLOWING STORY AND DISCUSS THE QUESTIONS BELOW

Times were difficult for Fyness Phiri, a married mother of four from the village of Chithope in the central region of Malawi. As Fyness recalls, she was "one of the poorest people in the village." She struggled to provide for her family, often needing to ask her neighbors for money to buy food and clothing for herself, her husband and their four children.

That was before she started working with the Evangelical Lutheran Development Service (ELDS) Livelihoods Improvement and Empowerment Project, supported in part by ELCA World Hunger. The program accompanies women and men like Fyness to build community and overcome the challenges of hunger and poverty.

At a community meeting in 2013, Fyness joined other women to start a village savings-and-loan group. After some training and community-building meetings with ELDS, the group gave out its first loans. Fyness and the other women were able to start small businesses and purchase seeds and fertilizers for their farms. Eventually, the start-up money helped Fyness produce enough food to feed her family, pay back her loan, and sell some of her surplus at market. **"Since I joined the project," she says, "my life has completely changed. I have food in my house, and I'm able to send my children to school. Because of the knowledge [I've gained], I will be able to continue and help others, even if the project phases out."**

In addition to loans, the women were trained in winter cropping and crop diversification using sustainable agricultural practices. Because of this training, participants like Fyness are realizing benefits that are life-changing.

Now, Fyness has started her own businesses and used the money to increase her crops and build a new house. From the project, Fyness learned, as representatives from ELDS say, that "it is possible to move out of poverty as long as you work with others and with dedication." Fyness changed her life, and she now is a role model to other villagers.

"I am able to do whatever I want because I have the means," she says. "I don't want again to experience the tough life that I went through before the project."

- How did the project help Fyness participate in the economy?
- What benefits was Fyness able to experience by participating in the economic activity of her community?
- What gifts, talents or skills did Fyness bring to others through her participation?

CONCLUSION

In the Bible, widows, orphans and strangers in the land are special subjects for the people's protection. In ancient Israel, they would have been particularly vulnerable to poverty, often having no land, and dependent on other people for food and shelter. They also were the least likely to be able to protect themselves in court if someone took advantage of them. If the economy of a community is set up so that even the most vulnerable members are protected, then everyone can benefit. On the other hand, if an economy is set up so that some people can be exploited or taken advantage of, then everyone is at risk. As the social statement points out, "Poverty is a problem of the whole community, not only of those who are poor or vulnerable" (p. 5). In an economy of grace, each person – from the most comfortable to the most vulnerable – can participate, both by sharing the fruit of the labor and enjoying the benefits of being part of the community.

PRAY

Holy God, you have blessed us with food, shelter, and all that we need, and yet we so often treat these gifts as if they came solely from our efforts. Forgive us for those times when we have blamed others for their poverty while praising ourselves for our wealth. Grant us comfort in times of need and afflict us in conscience when we are comfortable. Help us to be advocates and neighbors of all who are marginalized and excluded, to accompany one another in this world you have created. Grant that we may be instruments of justice to help reveal your grace. In your holy name, we pray. Amen.

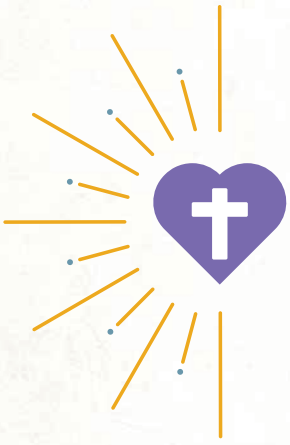
ELCA World Hunger
Session Three: Livelihood and Vocation

KEY LESSONS

- Every kind of work can be a sacred calling and is a "mask of God."
- Through our day-to-day work and occupations, we love and serve the neighbor.
- Economic policies and practices should respect human dignity.

MATERIALS NEEDED FOR LESSON:

- ☐ Board or large piece of paper to write on
- ☐ Marker to write with



Over the next few weeks, we will uncover how our Lutheran faith shapes our perspective and role in the economy. Each week, we will look at one key aspect of the economy and explore questions related to economic justice. As you journey through this study, we encourage you and your congregation to use ELCA World Hunger's "40 Days of Giving" daily devotional calendar to reflect on economics, hunger, hope and faith throughout the weeks of Lent. We also encourage you to look for other resources on economic life, especially the ELCA's social statement on economic life, "Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All."

INSTRUCTIONS FOR LEADER

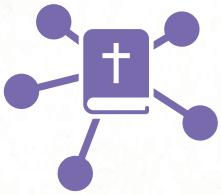
Welcome the participants to the session. In case people are new to the study sessions this season, you may want to read the paragraph above out loud so that participants are familiar with the topic. Feel free to adapt the lessons and activities each week to suit the needs of your congregation or group.

PRAY OR INVITE SOMEONE TO PRAY

Loving God, in this season of Lent, you invite us to reflect on our need for your grace as we long for the Easter to come. As you walk with us this season, grant us sight to see the brokenness of our communities and our economy; grant us courage to work together for a just world in which all are fed, and grant us hope in your promises for today and for the world to come. In the name of Jesus Christ, our crucified and risen Savior. Amen.

READ OR INVITE SOMEONE TO READ

In the first week of our study, we learned that one way to understand the economy is as a *household*. We also learned that our faith calls us to see the economy through the lens of God's abundant gifts to God's creation and how this is different from a view of the *economy* based on *scarcity*. Last week, we looked more closely at the difference between an *economy of grace* and an *economy of merit* and learned that grace helps us understand the importance of creating space for everyone to participate in the economy. This week, we will be looking at one key way we participate in the economy: our work.



CONNECT TO THE READINGS

In this Sunday's reading, water pours from a rock to quench the thirst of the Israelites. While we know that all gifts – food, water, shelter, sunlight, rain – come from God, Lutherans also know that we participate in the sharing of God's good gifts through our work. Martin Luther wrote, "God gives food, not as God did … when God gave manna from heaven, but through labor, when we diligently perform the work of our calling." Our sustenance remains a gift from God, but we are invited into a deeper gift – the gift of participation in the life-giving work of God through our vocation.

WORK AND VOCATION

If available, write the following words on a board or a large piece of paper:

- Vocation
- Calling
- Job
- Labor
- Work

Ask

- What comes to mind when you consider each of these words? (Allow some time for people to respond. As they do, write some of their responses on the board or paper next to the word to which they refer.)

READ

Each of these terms represents a perspective on a key way that we participate in the economy: our role as workers. As we work, we participate in the economy, and we are affected by the economy, both in positive ways (such as when economic upswings or new technology contribute to growth) and negative ways (such as when recessions or new technology put our jobs at risk.) How we experience the economy and economic institutions such as companies or industries greatly affects our satisfaction and security in our work. It also affects how we experience and use our freedom and creativity in our work.

Before Martin Luther, the medieval church divided common work from "vocation." (On a board or a large poster, draw a single horizontal line. Above the line, write: "Priests," "Nuns" and "Monks.") The church believed that all people had to work, but only certain workers fulfilled a sacred vocation or calling. While farmers, merchants and workers in the home went about the daily business of their lives, priests, nuns and monks were doing "God's work." Their jobs were sacred callings that made them closer to God. Everyone else was just laboring. (Here, write several other occupations under the line: farmers, merchants, sailors, builders, etc.)

The word "vocation" comes from the same Latin root as "vocare," which means "to call." That's why a vocation is sometimes referred to as a "calling."

- Imagine living in a world where only certain jobs were seen as "callings" for people of faith. How would this change the way you see your work?

In one of his most important reforms, Martin Luther did more than just break down this barrier; he reversed it! (On the board or another piece of poster paper, draw another horizontal line.) Ordinary work, he believed, was ordained in the Bible, while life as a monk or a nun was not.

In his writings on the book of Genesis, Luther wrote:

> *Thus every person surely has a calling. While attending to it, he serves God … when a maid milks the cows or a hired man hoes the field – provided they are believers, namely, that they conclude that this kind of life is pleasing to God and was instituted by God – they serve God more than all the monks and nuns, who cannot be sure about their kind of life. (Lectures on Genesis, Chapters 17 and 20).*

(On the board or piece of poster paper, write "Priests," "Nuns" and "Monks" below the line. Above the line, write the other occupations from the first list.)

Not only did Luther believe that every person has a sacred calling or vocation, he believed that doing this work was "pleasing to God [and] instituted by God." A person's work was the means through which God cared for the world. German theologian Gustaf Wingren (pronounced VIN-grin) wrote that Luther believed "There is a direct connection between God's work in creation and [God's] work in [humans' daily jobs.]"[1]

[1] Gustaf Wingren, Luther on Vocation, trans. Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1954), 9.

"God gives all good gifts; but you must lend a hand and take the bull by the horns; that is, you must work and thus give God good cause and a mask." – Luther on Psalm 147

Ask

- What are other goods God has given us in the world that require human work to be made useful?

SERVING THE NEIGHBOR

The labor humans must use to enjoy the gifts of God – including those gifts like creativity, which provide new and useful tools or art – is not meant merely as punishment for sin (Genesis 3:17-18). It is, for Lutherans, a way that our faith turns "outward," toward our neighbors. Through our work, we can show love and concern for other people in our communities. This is part of what Luther means by being a "mask of God."

When Peter and Andrew were called to be disciples, they left their jobs as fishermen and followed Jesus. Some early Christians believed that, like Peter and Andrew, all followers of Christ must leave their jobs to serve God. Luther, though, believed just the opposite: We don't serve God by leaving our work but by doing it with integrity and faithfulness.

Ask

- What would happen if every medical professional left their work tomorrow? How would that impact the community? What if every police officer left their job? Every farmer? Every baker? Every homemaker?

Luther believed that we serve God by serving our neighbors, by being God's "mask" to each other. The doctor serves the neighbor not by leaving their job but by doing it well. The police officer serves the neighbor not by leaving their job but by doing it well. The baker, the farmer, the homemaker and so on serve the neighbor by doing their work well, too. Likewise, the employer serves the neighbor by creating and preserving paying jobs.

Ask

- How does your work serve the neighbor?
- In what ways does your work or the economy as a whole make it difficult to focus on the neighbor as you do your work?

HUMAN DIGNITY

Work, in the Lutheran perspective, has a broader meaning than just the tasks we complete or the titles we hold (or don't hold.) In the social statement on economic life, the ELCA affirms that "our identity does not depend on what we do, [but] through our work we should be able to express [our] God-given dignity as persons of integrity, worth and meaning." Our work can be a way we express our deepest values and where our freedom and dignity are protected. As we have discussed, work is a way we participate in God's gracious and creative care for the world.

Unfortunately, that is not always the case. Work can also be dehumanizing, oppressive and exploitative for employees and managers. Changes in technology and trade can create widespread insecurity. When work disappears from an entire community, the results can be widespread and long-lasting, as many former

major manufacturing cities discovered when factories closed. The turn toward lower wages in many industries has also left a substantial gap between average income and cost of living for many people.

In the midst of this, the lens of vocation can be an important witness. Our Lutheran understanding of work is not that everyone, at all times, ought to have the perfect job. But we do believe that it is possible to have work that protects human dignity and provides opportunities for workers to see their labor as part of their vocation to serve their neighbors.

Invite the participants to partner with one other person and discuss the following questions. After a few minutes, invite them back together to share what they heard.

- In what ways do you feel dignified at work (either in paid or unpaid positions)?
- In what ways do you feel your dignity threatened by work?
- How do you respect the dignity of others you encounter in your work – for example, customers, managers, employees, co-workers, friends, colleagues, etc.?

Some of the changes in the global and U.S. economy are structural (a term we will discuss in the next session). When a new technology is developed that improves efficiency, it may create new jobs in one sector while rendering obsolete many jobs in another sector. Other changes occur at the level of public policy, such as when state laws restrict collective bargaining activities and reduce the power of workers. Still others are a combination of structure, policy and individual decisions.

In each case, the church responds with a testimony to the value of both work and workers, and the need for protections that ensure work is meaningful, dignified and sufficient. That often requires advocacy for workers caught in a web of structural economic injustice.

Read or invite someone to read the story below. Discuss as a group the questions that follow.

STOLEN WAGES

Julie and her husband, Alonzo, were excited to find out they were expecting their first child, but they knew that another mouth to feed would put a strain on their tight finances. Alonzo had been working as a janitor at an elementary school, but his company recently lost its contract to clean the school. Alonzo spent days filling out applications before a local fast-food restaurant offered him a job as a cook. The hours were long, but Julie and Alonzo hoped that the new job would be enough to pay their bills.

The first few weeks at work went great, and Alonzo was given lots of hours, starting work early in the morning and finishing late in the afternoon. When he received his first check, though, his face dropped. "I had added up the hours I was working, from 7 in the morning until 6 at night most days," he says. "For the first two weeks, that was about 100 hours." At his state's minimum wage of $7.25, that should have been more than $700, not including overtime for the hours he worked past 40 each week. Yet, his check for the pay period was only $450.

When Alonzo asked his manager about the missing hours, his manager explained that he had adjusted Alonzo's time at the start and the end of his shift. "If you're just setting things up

or cleaning them, you aren't really working," his manager explained. The manager had adjusted Alonzo's timesheet by nearly two hours a day. Still, that didn't explain the other missing hours or the lack of overtime. The manager dismissed both by saying that "part-time" workers don't get paid breaks or overtime. Only full-time workers do. Alonzo was disappointed, but he assumed a large restaurant chain like the one he worked for knew the law much better than he did. Plus, he couldn't afford to quit with a baby on the way.

A few weeks later, Alonzo found a flier at the library that described "wage theft." Wage theft, the flier read, is the failure of employers to pay employees wages they are legally entitled to. The inside of the flier listed rights that workers like Alonzo have, such as the right to overtime pay for hours over 40 per week and the right to be paid for their work, including setting up workstations or cleaning up after a shift.

Alonzo brought the flier to work and showed it to his manager. The manager threw the flier in the garbage and showed Alonzo a stack of new job applications. "If you don't like it," the manager said, "you can quit. There are plenty of people who need a job." Alonzo left the office dejected, knowing he could not afford to quit. By the end of the week, though, the choice was no longer his. When he picked up his paycheck, a letter of termination was with it. Alonzo was fired.

Low-wage workers like Alonzo are victimized by wage theft far too often. In fact, a 2014 policy brief from the Economic Policy Institute reports that a three-city survey found that more than two-thirds of workers were victims of wage theft, with the average worker losing an estimated $2,634 per year.[2]

Examples of wage theft include:

- failure to pay overtime to qualifying workers;
- forcing workers to work off the clock, without pay;
- failure to pay for breaks as required by law;
- theft of tips earned by employees; and
- failure to pay the legal minimum wage.

RETHINKING THE ECONOMY

If the evidence from the three cities researched in the survey noted above is applied to other major cities, the institute estimates that wage theft may cost low-wage workers in the United States more than $50 billion per year. By comparison, all the robberies, larcenies, burglaries and motor vehicle thefts reported by the FBI's Uniform Crime Statistics in 2012 cost victims less than $12 billion. All the robberies reported to police in 2012 – including personal robberies, bank robberies and store robberies – resulted in little more than $340 million in property stolen.

Part of the solution to this problem is outreach with corporate leaders, employers and managers to help raise their awareness of employment and wage laws and to foster concern for workers. But this outreach will only be successful if policies are already in place to protect workers. For that reason, ELCA Advocacy is working in several states to support legislation that prohibits wage theft and holds employers accountable.

- **The Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy (VICPP)** – ELCA Advocacy's public policy office in the state – has convened a statewide wage-theft taskforce of the best

[2] http://www.epi.org/publication/epidemic-wage-theft-costing-workers-hundreds/

advocates on wage theft in the state. Over the next two years, faith advocates and the taskforce will recommend administrative changes that could improve enforcement against wage theft and then will work to create and hopefully win a comprehensive new wage payment law in the state, which will include a provision for overtime pay. VICPP is also working to ensure that new legislation treats all workers fairly. The current Virginia law excludes occupations that were traditionally held by African Americans, such as farmworkers and domestic workers. Through VICPP and its partners, ELCA congregations in Virginia are working toward justice for all workers in their state.

- **The Faith Action Network**, ELCA Advocacy's state public policy office in Washington state, and **Lutheran Advocacy Ministry–New Mexico** have also been active in protecting workers' wages, encouraging enforcement of current laws and advocating for passage of comprehensive legislation.

The work of ELCA Advocacy reflects the ELCA's call for "government enforcement of regulations against discrimination, exploitative work conditions and labor practices" and our church's call for employers to "compensate all people … at an amount sufficient for them to live in dignity" ("Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All: A Social Statement on Economic Life," 1999). It is also a reflection of the ELCA's commitment to accompany and advocate for people facing hunger and poverty. When workers' rights to wages are violated, one of the key routes out of hunger – dependable employment – is closed. Protecting these rights is one way ELCA members are working to end the cycle of hunger and poverty for good.

> To learn how you can support these efforts, visit **ELCA.org/Advocacy** and sign up for e-alerts from ECLA Advocacy.

PRAY

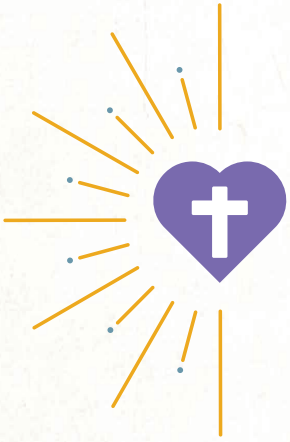
Loving God, we give thanks for our labor, even as we pray for rest. We give thanks for our workdays, even as we long for weekends. In your gracious love, you have called us to be your "masks," to love and serve one another in our vocations. Yet, for many of us, economic realities stifle even our best efforts. Wages and profits fall, factories and offices close, and families and communities suffer every month. Be near us, O God, in times of growth and times of need. Keep our hearts and minds ever open to one another, keep our eyes focused on the dignity and worth of all your creatures, and guide our reason and wisdom that we may share in your work of building a world of justice, hope, freedom and dignity. In your name, we pray. Amen.

ELCA World Hunger

Session Four: A Just World (Where All Are Fed)

KEY LESSONS

- In a just economy, every person's dignity is respected, and all have a fair opportunity to acquire the things necessary for life.



Over the next few weeks, we will uncover how our Lutheran faith shapes our perspective and role in the economy. Each week, we will look at one key aspect of the economy and explore questions related to economic justice. As you journey through this study, we encourage you and your congregation to use ELCA World Hunger's "40 Days of Giving" daily devotional calendar to reflect on economics, hunger, hope and faith throughout the weeks of Lent. We also encourage you to look for other resources on economic life, especially the ELCA's social statement on economic life, "Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All."

INSTRUCTIONS FOR LEADER

Welcome the participants to the session. In case people are new to the study sessions this season, you may want to read the paragraph above out loud, so that participants are familiar with the topic. Feel free to adapt the lessons and activities each week to suit the needs of your congregation or group.

PRAY OR INVITE SOMEONE TO PRAY

Loving God, in this season of Lent, you invite us to reflect on our need for your grace as we long for the Easter to come. As you walk with us this season, grant us sight to see the brokenness of our communities and our economy; grant us courage to work together for a just world in which all are fed, and grant us hope in your promises for today and for the world to come. In the name of Jesus Christ, our crucified and risen Savior. Amen.

READ OR INVITE SOMEONE TO READ

In the first week of our study, we learned that one way to understand the economy is as a household. We also learned that our faith calls us to see the economy through the lens of God's abundant gifts to God's creation and how this is different from a view of the economy based on *scarcity*. In the second week, we looked more closely at the difference between an *economy of grace* and an *economy of merit* and learned that grace helps us understand the importance of creating space for everyone to participate in the economy. Last week, we learned how we serve God and our neighbors through our vocations. This week, we will be looking at *justice* as it relates to the economy.

CONNECT TO THE READINGS

In the Gospel this week, Jesus is confronted by a question about someone born blind: "Rabbi," the disciples ask, "who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:2). At the time, conditions like blindness, sickness and poverty were seen as curses from God on those who had sinned. Jesus' response reveals that God's desire is for all to participate in the uncovering of grace. As the story progresses, Jesus also makes clear that the problem here is not the man's sense of sight but rather that the system of beliefs and laws that marginalized people had blinded the Pharisees to God's presence in their midst. When our prejudicial beliefs about other people – based on race, class, gender or level of ability – become enshrined in laws or traditions that exclude or marginalize them, we are denying the power of God's grace to break forth in our midst, and "[our] sin remains" (John 9:41).

WHAT IS JUSTICE?

Because it covers so many contexts, justice can be difficult to define. The ELCA's social statements offer some clues. Below are several selections on justice from the social statements. For the first section this week, divide the participants into groups. Give each group a quote from a social statement and ask them to discuss the questions to the right.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What does the selection say about justice?
- What practices, policies or behaviors does justice demand, according to the selection?

ELCA SOCIAL STATEMENTS ON JUSTICE

From "Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All: A Social Statement on Economic Life" (1999):

God who "executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry" (Psalm 146:7) is revealed in Jesus, whose mission was "to bring good news to the poor ...release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4: 18-19). The kingdom of God he proclaimed became real through concrete acts of justice: feeding people, freeing them from various forms of bondage, embracing those excluded by the systems of his day, and calling his followers to a life of faithfulness to God.

From "Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice" (1993):

Caring, serving, keeping, loving, and living by wisdom – these translate into justice in political, economic, social and environmental relationships. Justice in these relationships means honoring the integrity of creation and striving for fairness within the human family. It is in hope of God's promised fulfillment that we hear the call to justice; it is in hope that we take action. When we act interdependently and in solidarity with creation, we do justice. We serve and keep the earth, trusting its bounty can be sufficient for all and sustainable.

From "For Peace in God's World" (1995):

Justice points toward an economy ordered in ways that:

- respect human dignity;
- provide the necessities of life;
- distribute good and burdens fairly and equitably; and
- are compatible with a life-sustaining ecosystem.

Sustainable growth and fair distribution are vital in creating economic justice. Both should enable all to participate in the economy. Global economic integration should enhance well-being among and within nations. Fiscal policy, business practices, investment policies and personal lifestyles, including patterns of consumption, should contribute to economic justice and the long-term sustainability of our planet.

From "Faith, Sexism, and Justice: Conversations toward a Social Statement" (2016)[1]:

One fundamental reason for Christians [to talk about women and justice] is the belief that God as creator makes all people with dignity, and so our church (the ELCA) is committed to the full and equitable participation of all people in church and society. Yet, for example, women and girls as a group experience tragically high rates of physical and sexual abuse, as well as economic disparities in income and opportunities. … Christians believe that God is at work in society to bring greater justice, and we are called to be God's hands in doing the same. That means society should strive to respect the needs, rights, and responsibilities of all people. These include equality of access in many matters, such as health care, personal safety, public and ecclesial leadership, education and financial well-being.

From "The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries" (2013):

In some contexts, justice emphasizes equity – the disinterested, even-handed application of rules to each person – and the determination of eligibility of benefits or imposition of penalties. In other contexts, justice demand attention to differences among people – for instance, the distribution of some goods according to particular circumstances of need or merit. A central theme, however, weaves together all the various dimensions of justice. Justice speaks about social relations and the need to create, exercise, or restore right relationship between and among individuals in community.

From "Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture" (1993):

But God has not gathered the Church as yet one more example of brokenness. The Church exists to proclaim Jesus the Christ, whose life, death, and resurrection mean freedom for the world. The Church also exists to teach the law of God, announcing the God who justifies and expects all people to do justice. So, the Church must cry out for justice, and thereby resist the cynicism fueled by visions that failed and dreams that dies. The Church must insist on justice, and thereby refuse to blame victimized people for their situations. The Church must insist on justice, and thereby assure participation of all people. The Church that pursues justice will face and address difficult social, political, and economic problems such as: how racism must be confronted in order to build a society where diversity is truly valued; how race and ethnicity figure in political decisions on immigration, crime, and environmental pollution; and how economic forces work against people of color in housing, medical care, education, and employment.

From "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" (2009):

Trust is essential for the good of society. This is true in general terms for the proper functioning of communities and pertains especially to the social practices and institutions that affect and are affected by human sexuality. The development of social trust must be a central concern for all who seek the good of the neighbor in the pursuit of justice and the common good. … This church supports social policies and practices that encourage the growth of healthy relationships and will question publicly those that erode social trust or undermine the structures within which trust is learned and preserved.

[1] This "study" is a step toward a social statement on women and justice. The study provides an opportunity for readers to provide their feedback to the social statement task force prior to the writing of the social statement.

After your group has had some time to discuss the questions above, invite them to look back at the social statement quotes. Ask them to identify any words, themes or phrases that are common among all the quotes or notable in their own quote. Some examples might be: participation, equity, all, common good, church, relationships.

Justice takes many forms and encompasses many aspects of our lives. Economic justice, in particular, is a theme we see in several social statements because it impacts so many parts of life: at work, at home, at church, in government and in education.

- What are some ways the economy affects your life as: an employee, co-worker or employer? As a family member? As a citizen? As a church member?

In a just economy, every person's dignity is respected, and all have a fair opportunity to acquire the things necessary for life. Economic justice also means that burdens and benefits are shared equitably. No single group should reap all the benefits of an economy; nor should one group bear all the burdens. When one group holds all or most of the wealth of a community, or when one group bears all or most of the burdens, injustice may be the culprit.

THE CHURCH AND JUSTICE

Economic justice was not far from the mind of Martin Luther, as we saw in the last three weeks. Price-gouging and usury (the issuing of loans with very high interest rates) garnered particularly sharp criticism from Luther, in part because of their effect on people living in poverty.

Luther didn't stop at criticism, though. He also pushed the church to respond positively:

> *"Every parish should have a common treasury for the poor" (Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount).*

THE CHURCH'S WEB OF POVERTY:

Indulgences, the practice of selling remission of sins, were, in fact, tied to these economic practices, though Luther may not have known how closely the two were connected. One of the reasons Albrecht, the archbishop of Mainz, was so eager to sell indulgences was that he had borrowed a lot of money from the Fuggers, a wealthy banking family. To pay back the loan, Albrecht agreed to give half of the money from indulgences to repay the loan and to send the other half of the money to help rebuild St. Peter's basilica in Rome.[2] Luther knew how the economy in Germany harmed people in poverty, especially through high-interest loans, and he also saw a huge disparity between the wealth of the Catholic Church and the poverty of the German people.

From the "Ninety-five Theses:

#86 Why does not the pope, whose wealth is today greater than the riches of the richest, build just this one church of St. Peter with his own money, rather than with the money of poor believers?

[2] For more on this, see Samuel Torvend, *Luther and the Hungry Poor: Gathered Fragments* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 18-19.

The Fugger banking interest, along with the common practices of usury, price-gouging and selling indulgences created a web that caught many people in poverty. Luther believed the church was called to respond. Luther himself critiqued sharply the practices that kept so many in poverty. He compared unjust economic practices to theft:

> *"And in the cities there are not only the people who break into a citizen's house, but also the ones who cleverly and secretly suck out a city's resources with their usury and their swindles in the market and wherever else they can" (Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount).*

THE COMMON CHEST

One method of responding to hunger and poverty in Germany in the 1500s was what came to be called the "common chest." The first common chest was established in Wittenberg in 1520 or 1521. It was an actual chest to hold money and goods that could be used when someone in need came to the church. The chest had four locks, and four stewards each held a key to one of the locks so that they could decide together how to distribute the funds. Much of the money came from bequests and donations, but some also came from local taxes. This was a very early example of cooperation between the church and the government to help people in need.

Some of the ways the money was used might sound similar to relief given to people in need today, to help them purchase food, to support children who are orphaned, or to provide money to support a family in need. **But the Wittenberg common chest was also a way for the church to pursue justice for people left behind by the economy.**

For example, monies from the chest were used to refinance high-interest loans, to provide vocational training to people who were unemployed, and to provide medical care for people who could not afford it. In these ways, the common chest was a testimony against economic injustice. Through it, the church could act within the economy in positive ways.

Luther saw the common chest as part of the basic "furniture" of the church. He believed that the church should not just help someone who was in poverty. The church should also try to prevent someone from falling into poverty: **"For so to help a man that he does not need to become a beggar is just as much of a good work and a virtue as to give alms to a man who has already become a beggar"** (Commentary on Psalm 82). Indeed, Luther saw serving the neighbor's material needs as part of the calling of the church. Speaking of the sacrament of Holy Communion, he wrote, "But in times past this sacrament was so properly used, and the people were taught to understand this fellowship so well, that they even gathered food and material goods in the church, and these – as St. Paul writes in I Corinthians 11 – distributed among those in need" ("The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ," 1519).

STRUCTURAL INJUSTICE

It may be easy to point out merchants who charge exorbitant prices to people who cannot afford them or to identify business practices that exploit workers. But when the structure of an entire system is set up to lock people out of opportunities, it can be much more difficult to assess the situation. For these kinds of situations, the term "structural injustice" applies. Structural injustice includes the ways that opportunities are open or closed to

different people. It is present when one group of people has more access to opportunities than another group, as the quote from "Faith, Sexism, and Justice" implied above.

The hard part of dealing with structural injustice is that it is deeply entrenched, and there is not necessarily one individual or group to blame. Also, it can be deeply entrenched, making it difficult to see alternatives.

(The following is from "Faith, Sexism, Justice: Conversations toward a Social Statement," published by the ELCA in 2016. The resource can be downloaded for free at ELCA.org/womenandjustice. Your congregation is invited to participate in these conversations as our church works toward a social statement on women and justice. The resource offers ways for you to share your feedback with the task force responsible for the social statement process.)

While sin occurs in our relationship with God, it also arises in creation when we sin against one another. When we think that others are of less value than we are because of their sex or gender, or when we believe that others do not bear God's image in the same way because of their sex or gender, we sin. In addition, sexism and gender and sex discrimination are also social or structural sin. This occurs when the very structures, rules and policies of companies, institutions and communities discriminate against groups of people and individuals. Read the following story and discuss the reflection questions.

GERI'S STORY

I am 52 years old, and I work 30 hours a week at a large retail store. I have a 10-year-old daughter. A year ago my mother fell and sustained an injury that prevented her from caring for herself, so I cut my hours to part-time to help her. When I worked full-time, I was paid an hourly wage that covered our family expenses. I earned less than my male co-workers, but I did get health insurance for myself and my daughter. I lost our health insurance when I changed to part-time work.

My brother helps our mother, too. But he doesn't think cooking and cleaning are a man's work. So I spend more time caring for my mom than my brother does. I devote about 15 hours a week to helping my mom. If I could get compensated – even a little – for assisting my mother, it would help me feel like I wasn't so on the edge financially. And I could put some money away for my daughter's education.

Ask

- What assumptions about men, women and work do you hear in Geri's story? How might assumptions like this affect Geri's job prospects if she were to seek new employment?
- What is your reaction to her brother's belief that some duties are "women's work," and that women are better caregivers than men?
- Earlier, we said that justice includes respecting each person's dignity. In what ways did Geri experience this side of justice or injustice?

The unequal pay that Geri experienced is very real. A recent study found that "in 2009 … women one year out of college who were working full time were paid, on average, just 82 percent of what their male peers were paid."[3] When gender inequality intersects with racial

[3] "Graduating to a Pay Gap: The Earnings of Women and Men One Year After College Graduation Executive Summary and Recommendations," American Association of University Women, published March 2013, http://www.aauw.org/files/2013/02/graduating-to-a-pay-gap-the-earnings-of-women-and-men-one-year-after-college-graduation.pdf.

inequality, the disparities can be even starker. A recent report shows that – compared to what a white, male worker earns – Hispanic women earn 54 percent, African American women earn 64 percent, American Indian women earn 59 percent and Asian American women earn 90 percent.[4]

The disparities in wages aren't limited to secular companies, though:

Nationwide, women clergy earn 76 cents for each dollar earned by male clergy.[5]

Within the ELCA, women clergy on average earn 86 cents for each dollar earned by male clergy. [6]

- What are some possible reasons for the significant gender pay gap in society in general and in the ELCA?
- In what ways might the gender pay gap reflect unequal value for the work of men and women?
- What does inequality in clergy salaries say about the presence of justice within the ELCA?
- How is the church called to respond to inequality in pay, so that our own practices reflect our vision for justice?
- How is the church called to respond to inequality in pay in other industries or occupations?

CONCLUSION

As Christians, we are called to respond to our neighbors in need. However, we are also called to recognize and name the economic injustices that create need in our communities. Martin Luther saw the German economy as a web that trapped people in poverty, with the support of a church that taught the buying and selling of salvation. In what ways does our current economy act like a web in which people are trapped? How does our church work against this kind of injustice?

PRAY

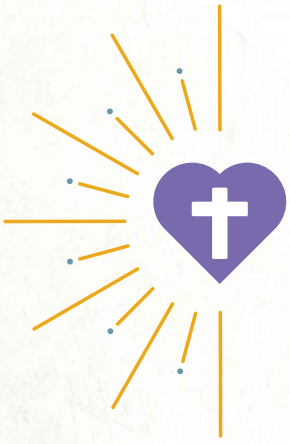
Just and merciful Lord, in baptism, you claimed us as your own and commissioned us to "strive for justice and peace in all the earth." Forgive us for the injustices we have created and for the injustices we have tolerated. Be our courage and our strength as we work toward a just world, where all are welcome and where every dignity is respected. Bless our church that it may be a wellspring of justice in our community and our world. In your holy name, we pray. Amen.

[4] The Simple Truth About the Gender Pay Gap," American Association of University Women, published February 2016, http://www.aauw.org/research/the-simple-truth-about-the-gender-pay-gap/.
[5] Tobin Grant, "Gender pay gap among clergy worse than national average-A first look at the national data," National Religion News Service, published Jan. 12, 2016, http://religionnews.com/2016/01/12/gender-pay-gap-among-clergy-worse-than-national-average-a-first-look-at-the-new-national-data/.
[6] 45th Anniversary of the Ordination of Women in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Rostered Leader Survey" (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, forthcoming).

ELCA World Hunger
Session Five: A Sustainable Future

KEY LESSONS

- Economic growth must be measured by the opportunities it creates for humans and by its effects on all of creation.
- Humans are called to be wise stewards of creation.
- Economic activity and care for creation are closely tied together.



Over the next few weeks, we will uncover how our Lutheran faith shapes our perspective and role in the economy. Each week, we will look at one key aspect of the economy and explore questions related to economic justice. As you journey through this study, we encourage you and your congregation to use ELCA World Hunger's "40 Days of Giving" daily devotional calendar to reflect on economics, hunger, hope and faith throughout the weeks of Lent. We also encourage you to look for other resources on economic life, especially the ELCA's social statement on economic life, "Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All."

INSTRUCTIONS FOR LEADER

Welcome the participants to the session. In case people are new to the study sessions this season, you may want to read the paragraph above out loud, so that participants are familiar with the topic. Feel free to adapt the lessons and activities each week to suit the needs of your congregation or group.

PRAY OR INVITE SOMEONE TO PRAY

Loving God, in this season of Lent, you invite us to reflect on our need for your grace as we long for the Easter to come. As you walk with us this season, grant us sight to see the brokenness of our communities and our economy; grant us courage to work together for a just world in which all are fed, and grant us hope in your promises for today and for the world to come. In the name of Jesus Christ, our crucified and risen Savior. Amen.

READ OR INVITE SOMEONE TO READ

In the first week of our study, we learned that one way to understand the economy is as a *household.* We also learned that our faith calls us to see the economy through the lens of God's abundant gifts to God's creation and how this is different from a view of the economy based on *scarcity.* In the second week, we looked more closely at the difference between an *economy of grace* and an *economy of merit* and learned that grace helps us understand the importance of creating space for everyone to participate in the economy. In the third week, we learned how we serve God and our neighbors through our *vocations,* and last week, we learned about *justice* and *injustice.* This week, we will be looking at *sustainability.*

CONNECT TO THE READINGS

In a valley of dry bones, the prophet Ezekiel bears witness to the power of God to bring new life in desolate places (Ezekiel 37:1-14). In the Gospel of John, Jesus reveals the power of God to overcome death in the raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-45). Scripture testifies to God who calls God's people and the entire world to new life, a life of renewal, restoration and reconciliation. Our faith in the promise of God to bring new life invites us to seek the renewal, restoration and reconciliation even in our most desolate places, such as those where drought, disaster and degradation threaten humans and non-human nature alike.

SUSTAINABILITY

A just economy provides sufficient access to the goods we need to live today, but it also remains mindful of the goods future generations will need to live tomorrow and beyond. "Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All," the ELCA's social statement on economic life, defines sustainability as "the capacity of natural and social systems to survive and thrive together over the long term." This is an important piece to consider when evaluating our economic practices and policies.

Growth can have many great effects – more jobs, more affordable goods and more improved technologies. But it can also have startling negative consequences when the good of the whole of creation is not taken into account.

This can be true for both the natural environment and for human communities, and sometimes the two are tied together, as we will see later.

CARING FOR CREATION:

As Christians, we believe that God created humans within a complex and interrelated world. We also believe that God continues to sustain the earth: "When you send forth your spirit … you renew the face of the ground" (Psalm 104:30). As stewards of God's creation, "we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth" (ELCA, "Caring for Creation: Vision Hope and Justice," 1993). The biblical call to have "dominion" over creation (Genesis 1:28) must be read in light of how God exercises dominion over creation, "a slave, being born in human likeness (Philippians 2:7), wearing a crown of thorns" ("Caring for Creation").

- What do you think this means?
- How does God's dominion differ from other kinds of dominion?

The season of Lent began for us with the story of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness (see Matthew 4:1-11).

- Do you remember the three temptations? (Look for answers: turn stones into bread, throw himself from the temple to test God, and bow down to the devil in exchange for power over all the world.)

Two of these temptations are of particular interest for us this week. First, Jesus is tempted to transform nature to suit his own needs, to turn stones into bread. This may seem like a trivial act in the story, but how often are we, as stewards of God's creation, tempted to use our power to turn nature to our own ends, without concern for the good of creation? Harmful environmental practices can convert creation into things useful to humans, but when done without thought to the good of nature or the sustainability of our own action, these practices can have long-lasting consequences. Unsustainable farming practices, for example, can create food in the short-term but can also deplete vital nutrients from the soil, leaving the land infertile.

The third temptation, to power, is especially pernicious. Jesus is no stranger to power. He grants the disciples authority over "unclean spirits" (Matthew 10:1), claims for himself power over life and death (John 5:21), and claims to have "conquered the world" (John 16:33). Yet, the power Jesus exercises, and the power the devil offers, are too very different things. Jesus' power and authority are ultimately for the good of the world, to save it and not to condemn it (John 3:17). This is the power of a servant-king. The power the devil offers is "power-over," the oppressive authority of a lord who believes those under dominion are mere objects to be traded at will. This power is the type of dominion that Jesus rejects and that the ELCA's social statement on caring for creation warns against. When we exercise our dominion over creation without respect for the good of creation itself, we are falling victim to the temptation Jesus rejected.

Caring for creation means, first, respecting both human dignity and the inherent value of God's creation. It is not "ours" to do with as we will; it is God's, and we have been entrusted to use and care for it as wise, responsible stewards. Second, caring for creation means respecting the many ways in which we are dependent on

the environment around us. When creation suffers – when water is polluted, when land is infertile and when creatures become extinct – we all suffer.

SIN

Sin disrupts our relationship with God, our relationships with one another and our relationship with God's creation. Martin Luther believed that before humanity's first sin, our relationship with creation was very different:

> *I have no doubt that before sin the air was purer and more healthful, and the water more prolific; yes, even the sun's light was more beautiful and clearer. Now the entire creation in all its parts reminds us of the curse that was inflicted because of sin. … Now the earth is not only barren in many places; but even the fertile areas are defaced by darnel, weeds, thorns, and thistles. This is a great misfortune … . (Lectures on Genesis, Chapter 3)*

In Scripture, too, creation is caught up in the consequences of sin: "We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies" (Romans 8:22-23).

CREATION AND HUMAN ECONOMY

The consequences of our unsustainable use of the environment are evident in the many ways the climate is changing. In Alaska, warmer winters threaten the very existence of our neighbors in areas like Shishmaref, home to an Inupiaq community and Shishmaref Lutheran Church (ELCA). In this island village, large ice packs used to protect the coast from erosion from fierce winter storms. Now, the warmer climate means less ice, which means much greater erosion. According to some estimates, the island is losing nearly a foot of land per year to the sea. With less than three square miles of land, the situation is dire.

The effects of climate change represent the deep connections between care for creation and care for human communities. While many of the profits of large-scale, unsustainable environmental practices that drive climate change are enjoyed by a handful of corporations, countries and individuals, the effects of climate change are often faced by those least able to weather it. Communities around the world with very high rates of hunger, where nearly 1 in 4 is undernourished, are in some of the regions most vulnerable to climate change. These include coastal communities like Shishmaref, where flooding, erosion and powerful storms can threaten the community's existence.

Read the story below and respond to the questions that follow.

FLINT, WATER AND JUSTICE

The story of the water crisis in Flint, Mich., is a story of how care for creation was undermined by a lack of concern for the dignity of human beings. It is a story of dominion exercised in harmful ways, for people and the environment.

It took nearly two years for the state government in Michigan to admit what we now know, that the water in Flint was unsafe to use. For 18 months, residents complained of rashes and illness from the water in their homes and workplaces, but despite warnings from researchers that levels of lead in the

water were dangerously high, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and the regional office of the Environmental Protection Agency insisted the water was safe. By the time they told the truth, it was too late. Adults and children throughout the city of 99,000 people had tested positive for lead in their bodies.

Lead poisoning can have serious, long-term health effects. In children, it can delay brain development. It can affect organs like the liver and kidneys. While the effects of lead poisoning can be lessened with a diet high in nutrient-rich foods, there is no "cure."

This lead-poisoned water was no environmental accident. It was the result of choices made by people in power in Michigan, few of whom actually lived in Flint and had to depend on the water. In 2014, an emergency financial manager appointed by Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder made the ill-advised choice to switch the water source for Flint to the toxic Flint River, despite warnings against this. The water was filled with bacteria, leading to three advisories in just one summer for residents to boil their water. To treat the bacteria, chemicals were poured into the water at dangerously high rates, corroding the pipes and leaching lead into the water that would eventually flow into homes, schools, businesses and churches. This was water that people gave to their children, that churches used to baptize infants, and that adults and children alike used to bathe. Because of the dishonesty and lack of concern of people in power, residents had no idea how dangerous it was.

Flint's story does not begin with water but with economic collapse. What was once a booming industrial city with good jobs for many residents became one of the poorest cities in the region when big companies like General Motors moved their facilities to countries where they could pay their workers much lower wages. The results were nearly immediate: high unemployment, a deflated real estate market that devalued homeowners' largest assets, and a community without the financial or political power to determine its own future.

This laid the groundwork for Michigan to appoint an unelected emergency financial manager with near-absolute power over the finances of the city, including power over its public services. What had been an economic crisis became an environmental crisis and a public health crisis. Its roots were in a lack of opportunities for residents to participate in the economy and thus in leadership of their community. An unsustainable economy led to an unsustainable ecology.

Fortunately, many people have stepped in to accompany the city. Salem Lutheran Church (ELCA) has been one of the largest sites for water distribution in the city, providing fresh water to neighbors. With the support of ELCA World Hunger, Salem's food pantry also has been able to provide the nutrient-rich foods needed to counteract the effects of lead. And ELCA Advocacy, also supported in part by ELCA World Hunger, has been an important voice on a national level for funding to help the city deal with the crisis. The works goes on, but Flint remains an important reminder of how closely the economy and the environment are connected.

- How did the loss of jobs in Flint contribute to the water crisis?
- Earlier, we learned about helpful and harmful ways humans practice dominion. How did the government exercise dominion in harmful ways?
- How could a greater focus on sustainability – of the environment and the community – have helped to prevent the crisis?
- How is the church called to respond to situations like this?
- What threats to your environment are present where you live?

SEEKING GRACE IN CREATION

News headlines and reports are important reminders of how far humans have to go in caring for God's creation. Polluted waterways, eroded coastlines, droughts and human-caused environmental disasters are the wages of our failure to act as good stewards of the environment. A degraded and threatened environment is a powerful reminder of sin.

Yet, still the grace of God is revealed in our relationship with creation in profound ways. Care for creation is about more than the "hot-button" issues we see in news feeds today. It is about more than the bare facts of droughts or floods. It is about more than fossil fuels and water management. At its root, our vocation as stewards of creation is a collaborative partnership in which we come to see the presence of God in, through, around and with us – enriching our labors and shaping the world. As Luther wrote, "God is entirely present, personally and essentially, in Christ on earth in his mother's womb, in the crib, in the temple, in the wilderness, in cities, in houses, in the garden, and in the field." The call to care for creation is the call to draw near to the presence of God in the world around us, in the restored relationships between us and our neighbors, and in the life-giving relationship between humans and the land.

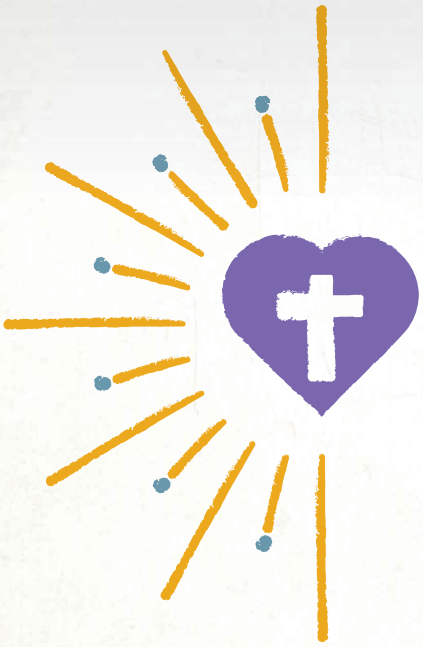
PRAY

Creator God, you have blessed us with a bountiful world filled with your goodness and called us to share with you in stewarding our resources. Forgive us for the ways we have fallen short in caring for one another and in caring for all of creation. Open our eyes, ears and hearts that we may be attentive to the cries for justice in our world. Open our mouths that our voices may be lifted up to advocate for justice for our neighbors and your world.
In your gracious name, we pray. Amen.

NOTES

NOTES

Children's Activities



Each week, while older learners participate in the Lenten study sessions, young children are invited to take part in their own age-appropriate lessons with similar themes. Each children's session has a short lesson and an image to draw or color. You can use printed coloring pages or ask the children to draw and color their own image. The image will be listed and shown before each lesson. In week three, the image will be done in a different way.

Children's Activities – Week One

HOUSEHOLD

This week, we are learning to see the whole world as one "household." You can use the discussion points below to guide your time with children. Afterward, they can draw a picture of a house with people, animals, etc.

What is a household? (A household is a group of people – and maybe animals – that live together and help take care of one another.)

Who is part of your household? (Note: If a child mentions pets, this can be a good occasion to talk about care for all of God's creation later in the lesson.)

One of the ways that the Bible teaches us to see the world is as one household in which we are all connected and we all help each other.

In your household, are there things that you share or that everyone can use? (Look for answers: food, water, heat, furniture, some toys or entertainment options)

Are there things that you don't share? (Look for answers: clothes, some special toys)

What if you found out someone in your household didn't have enough food to eat? How would you react? (Look for answers: share with them, help them get food)

God sees everyone in our community like we see the people in our household, as people we love and care for, and we should, too. When someone doesn't have what they need to live, we should help take care of that person. Sometimes that means sharing our food with them, if they are hungry, or donating a coat for people without winter clothes. But it can also mean other things, too.

Where do you get your food? (Look for answers: grocery store)

What if you don't have any money?

What if you have money, but you can't get to the grocery store?

What if you don't have a grocery store near you?

What if someone in your household couldn't walk to the refrigerator or cupboard? How would you help them? (What if your pet needs food?)

What if they were really hungry but there was no food in the house? What would you do?

Some people in our communities face problems like this. Maybe they don't have enough money to buy food. Or, maybe they don't have transportation to get to the store. Or, maybe there isn't a store nearby with fresh food. How might we help them?

Our faith in God helps us see the world as our "household." The same way that we would help people in our house get the things they need, God wants us to help our neighbors get the things that they need. Sometimes, that means sharing what we have with them. Sometimes, though, that can also mean working together as a community so that each person can get what they need to live.

Children's Activities – Week Two

GIFT

Following this lesson, you can invite the children to draw a way that they can be a gift to other people.

When is the last time you received a gift? What was it?

When have you had to earn something, maybe by doing chores or doing good in school?

What is the difference between a gift and something we have to earn?

Martin Luther, who started the Lutheran church 500 years ago, thought that there was a big difference between things that are given as gifts and things that are earned. The church in his time taught that we had to work hard to earn God's love and forgiveness and to make it into heaven. But Luther saw that the Bible teaches us that God's love isn't earned. It's a gift called grace.

When was the last time you did something really special to help your family?

How did they respond?

Do you think they loved you even before you did that?

What if we do something wrong? Do our families still love us?

God loves us long before we "do" anything to deserve God's love. Even when we do something wrong, God never stops loving us. This is what we mean by grace.

What are some ways you know that someone loves you?

One of the things Luther taught was that everything around us – plants, animals, sunlight, food, our friends and families – are signs that God loves us. Our whole world is a gift from God. We don't earn it, but God gives it to us. The most important gift God gives is the promise through Jesus that God will always be with us and will always love us.

How can we show that love to other people? How can we be a gift to others and share with them the gift of Jesus and God's grace?

Children's Activities – Week Three

WORK

What do you want to be when you grow up? Why does that job appeal to you?

The Bible says a lot about work. We know that people in the Bible had different jobs. Can you think of anyone?

Here are some examples:

- Paul and Priscilla were tentmakers (Acts 18:2-4).
- Peter and Andrew were fishermen (Matthew 4:18-22).
- Lydia was a cloth merchant (Acts 16:14).
- Jesus was a carpenter (Mark 6:3).
- David was a shepherd (I Samuel 16:11) and a king (II Samuel 5:3).

Why do people have to work? (Look for answers: to afford food or to earn money)
Are there kinds of work that we do that we aren't paid for? (Look for answers: volunteering, chores, some stay-at-home caregivers)

When we earn money from our work, we can afford the things we need to live, such as food, clothes and shelter. But work is also about enjoying the gifts God gives us.

What kinds of things does a carpenter make? (Look for answers: chair, table, bed, etc.)
What does a carpenter use to make things? (Look for answer: wood.)
Where does wood come from? (Look for answer: trees.)
Who makes the trees? (Look for answer: God.) God gives us trees, and God gives us skills to make trees into [insert answer: chairs, table, etc.] So, someone like a carpenter helps us enjoy God's gifts.

But a carpenter also helps other people. If someone needs a chair, a carpenter can make one. If someone is sick, whom do they go to? (Look for answer: doctor, nurse, etc.) What about our food? Who helps make our food? (Look for answers: farmers, cooks.)

God calls us to work so that we can enjoy God's gifts and share them with other people. So, work is about more than just earning money or finishing a job. Work is a way we show God's love to each other.

On the blank pages, write at the top:

"As a _____ , I will help others by _____ ." Invite the children to fill in the blanks and draw a picture below.

Children's Activities – Week Four

FAIRNESS

What does it mean to be fair?

Have you ever been in a situation when you felt you were treated unfairly? How did it make you feel?

Today, we are going to learn about fairness. To do this, each of us is going to draw a picture.

Divide the children into two groups and have them sit on opposite sides of the room. Explain to the children that each one is going to draw a picture of a rainbow, but they are only going to get certain crayons to use. To one group, pass out more than enough crayons for every child to draw a rainbow. To the other group, either pass out only enough crayons for each child to have one OR pass out crayons of only two colors. Most likely, at least one child will be upset about not having enough crayons. Tell them to do their best with what they have. If a child from the first group tries to share some of their crayons, don't stop them.

When the first group (with more crayons) is finished, bring both groups back together to share their pictures.

What differences do you see in the pictures? (Look for answers: less color in the second group, incomplete, etc.)

Why are the pictures different? (Look for answers: One group had more crayons.)

Was this fair? How could it have been fair for everyone?

If someone shared crayons: How did sharing the crayons help? Did it fix the problem? (Most likely not, but it probably helped some.)

Do the pictures mean that one group was better at drawing than the other group? (No)

Are there some people who are better artists than others? (Yes) Some people may be better artists than other people, and some people may work harder at being better artists over time.

Things like this happen in our communities, too, though not with crayons. Some people are hard workers, but no one will hire them because of how they look. Some kids are very smart, but they go to schools with too few resources to help them learn. Being fair doesn't mean everyone is the same. It means that everyone should have a fair try at doing their best.

The Bible teaches that every one of us is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), which means that every one of us is important and has something special to contribute. It also teaches that God sent Jesus because God loved the whole world and everyone in it (John 3:16). When we treat people unfairly, we aren't treating them the way that God wants us to treat them – with fairness so everyone has a chance to do their best.that every one of us is important and has something special to contribute. It also teaches that God sent Jesus because God loved the whole world and everyone in it (John 3:16). When we treat people unfairly, we aren't treating them the way that God wants us to treat them – with fairness so everyone has a chance to do their best.

Children's Activities – Week Five

CREATION

Where do you see God in your daily life?

One of the places that Martin Luther saw God's presence in his life was in nature. He wrote that God is present *"in the crib, in the temple, in the wilderness, in cities, in houses, in the garden, and in the field."*

How do you think God is present in the garden and the field?

Luther enjoyed spending time in nature. How do you enjoy God's creation?

The Bible teaches us that God created everything in the world – plants, animals, sunshine, rain, rivers, lakes, mountains – everything! The Bible also teaches us that we are to care for all these things the way that God cares for us.

How does God care for us? (Look for answers: love, protects us, wants us to be happy, etc.)

How do you think God wants us to take care of God's creation?

What are some ways that we don't take care of creation like God wants us to?

When we don't take care of creation the way we are supposed to, bad things can happen for nature and for us. Rivers and lakes might get polluted, animals and plants might not be able to live, and even the air can get too dirty to breathe. What do you think happens to humans when those things happen?

We need God's creation to live. We need the ground to help grow our food. We need clean water to drink. We need trees to help us get clean air and to provide shade. When we don't take care of nature, we don't take care of each other.

How can we take care of creation?

Draw a picture showing one way our church can help take care of God's creation.

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