

Implementing the ELCA Faith Practices Initiative in Your Ministry Setting

The current Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Faith Practices Initiative is based upon the promises we make at baptism: to **live** among God's faithful people; to **hear** the word of God and share in the Lord's Supper; to **proclaim** the good news of God in Christ through word and deed; to **serve** all people following the example of Jesus and to **strive** for justice and peace in all the earth.

As you use this initiative in your ministry context, the hope is that you will review the Faith Practices Initiative and develop strategies on how to implement the initiative that are unique to your ministry setting. The overall goal of the initiative is for there to be growth in discipleship, not only as individuals in the ministry, but the ministry setting as well. In other words, as your ministry implements this initiative you should ask yourself: "How are the participants in this ministry growing in their ability to be followers of Jesus Christ, not only in their words, but in their deeds?" "How is our ministry context growing in its ability to reflect its belief Jesus Christ?" Below are some suggestions on simple tasks that can help you begin this initiative in your ministry setting. Also, please go to the "Resources" icon on the Faith Practices website for additional information that may be helpful in your planning. You will note that each faith practice has its own set of resources for your review.

1. Begin a year-long emphasis on "the meaning of baptism". Take each faith practice and commit to focusing on it for at least two months as a congregation. For example, by the Advent and Christmas seasons your ministry might be ready to emphasize the faith practice of "**strive** for justice and peace in all the earth." Use this faith practice to highlight what the birth of Jesus Christ means for the world.
2. Organize the key ministry leaders in your setting and have a leadership retreat where you explore how this resource might be used in your ministry.
3. Go out into your local community and talk about your "water to wine" ministry. In this ministry you talk to unchurched people about the meaning of baptism (the water component of the "water to wine" ministry). As relationships are strengthened, talk about faith practices and emphasize the meaning of communion and bringing communion to the setting for the group to share (the wine component of the "water to wine ministry").
4. Have baptism as the theme for Sunday school for the year, center outreach projects around the faith practices.
5. Have baptism as the theme for Confirmation class; center the teachings around what it means to be a baptized child of God.
6. Establish small groups in a ministry setting which gather and discuss ways they would like to grow in discipleship using the faith practices. Members of these groups would

commit to sharing with the group how they have grown in their discipleship as a result of using these faith practices. The group would also commit to going out in the community and telling their story of growth in discipleship.

7. Make the implementation of this initiative a five year plan and focus on one faith practice each year.
8. Divide the ministry setting into five groups with each group taking one faith practice as their theme for the year. The group can lead worship periodically, organize community events, develop Bible studies, etc. around their faith practice.
9. Organize a prayer group that commits to praying for individuals and the faith community and their growth in each of the faith practices.
10. Invite the ELCA Prayer and Revival Team to host a revival with the meaning of baptism as the theme and have the team present workshops on the faith practices, prayer, etc. One additional role of the Prayer and Revival Team would be to discuss with the attendees how to integrate the initiative into their ministry settings.