



## A primer

### Purpose

The purpose of the Life of Faith initiative is to stir up a culture change that frees us to make *the service by the baptized in the arenas of daily life* the central focus of the church's mission.

This initiative intentionally builds on the premise and success of the Book of Faith initiative, which pioneered a grass-roots movement embracing a common vision in which all are invited to open scripture and join the conversation. The Life of Faith initiative connects the Book of Faith initiative to the many and varied forms of service to neighbors through family, workplace, school, local community, and world. Each expression of the church is encouraged to develop approaches and resources in order to make the Life of Faith initiative a vital part of its reason for existence.

### Vision

- We will learn to speak of “the expressions of the church” first as the people themselves, as well as the congregations, synods, churchwide, and other agencies and institutions.
- We will be able to speak as easily and concretely about the ministry by all the baptized in daily life as we currently do about the ministry that happens in and through congregations.
- The center of gravity for our living out “missional church” will shift from what we do as the church gathered to what we do as the church scattered.
- The understanding of “ministry” will grow from “what pastors do” and “what we do as the congregations” to include the love and service that is lived out in our everyday roles and relationships.
- We will become practiced at counting and reporting ministry in terms of the impact we are making in our homes, workplaces, schools, local communities, and around the world—not exclusively in terms of money received and numbers of participants.
- All of us—from children to adults—will be able comfortably and confidently to speak and live the faith in our daily lives.
- Burdens will be lifted from pastors when they are no longer seen as the ones primarily responsible for the ministry of the congregation; they will find joy and fulfillment as ministry multiplies through the lives of all God's people.
- “Church” will no longer be in competition with the activities and responsibilities of members, and “ministry” will multiply beyond our wildest expectations without having to ask people to add something more to their busy lives.
- The gathering rite of worship will be expanded to better receive people after a week of ministry, allowing them to report “God sightings” and to receive forgiveness for failures; the sending rite will be expanded to better commission and send people for the coming week of ministry.
- When faith is connected to life, congregations will experience renewal in purpose and vitality.

## Objectives

The gathered church is sent and scattered for the life of the world:

- To equip people to live out their faith in family, workplace, school, local community, and world.
- To connect faith to life as the church's shared endeavor: the body of Christ is embodied in service of neighbors and working for justice in everyday life experiences.
- To help people discern their callings in the world and to support them in following those callings.
- To prepare ministers of the Word as more effective teachers at the interface of faith and life.
- To accept people where they are in their faith understanding and to challenge them to grow to a deeper level.
- To invite those unfamiliar with or estranged from the faith to see the connection between faith, culture, intellect, science, learning, and life.
- To intensify the church's focus on mission as service to neighbors in the world through the everyday roles and relationships of our members.

## Action steps

The task force that is leading the Life of Faith Initiative seeks to involve as many people, organizations, and networks as possible to:

- Equip congregations as teaching and learning communities to fulfill their mission of equipping the baptized for their ministries in daily life.
- Expand and strengthen the network of teaching and learning communities: lay schools for ministry, campus ministries, congregations, camps, social ministry organizations, service learning opportunities, schools, colleges and universities, and seminaries.
- Create teaching and learning communities in other innovative forms, places, and contexts.
- Develop a network of support for those already involved in this work.
- Generate reflection and discussion on what we mean when we talk about church.
- Inspire experimentation and share what is learned about how to be a gathered-scattered church.
- Provide a web-based cache of resources, including a set of core resources available at no cost.
- Curate and distribute best practices in teaching and learning related to the initiative.

## What you can do

As a grassroots effort, we are counting on **you** to determine how to implement the purposes of the initiative in your particular context, and to share what you have done with other advocates. As you set out on this journey you might:

- Visit the Life of Faith webpage for resources and ideas
- Reflect on how you live out your baptismal vocation in daily life
- Start a conversation with people in your life or in your congregation
- Read a book or watch a video
- Start a study group in your congregation
- Take an online course
- Incorporate ministry in daily life discussion in your Bible conversations
- Study and sponsor the Life of Faith model resolution in your synod or congregation

- Explore lay school participation
- Experiment! Take an idea and run with it. Then share it with other Life of Faith proponents.

## Keys terms

Ministry in Daily Life

Spheres of influence

Arenas of Daily Life

Ministry by the baptized

Neighborliness of all believers

Gathered and Scattered Church/ministers/ministries

Ministry is daily life; daily life is ministry

You are a minister

Universal Priesthood

Vocation

Ministry (*diakonia*)

Call

Ordination (Word and Sacrament/Service)

Baptism as the primary ordination

Baptismal call

Baptismal covenant

Worship as formation for life

Life of Faith

(See <http://lifeoffaith.info> > About the Initiative > Key Terms for definitions.)



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.