

Life of Faith Initiative: Key Terms

The following is a lexicon of key terms as they are used in the Life of Faith Initiative.

Arenas of Daily Life

Service to the neighbor takes place in all the spheres of influence in which the baptized are located. In particular we focus on the neighbors God gives us to serve in our **family, workplace, school, local community, and world**. These five stations represent how the baptized are called to love and serve every person we meet as a neighbor, each one made in God's image and one for whom Christ died. Each of these arenas of daily life are located also within the context of creation, whose elements, flora, and creatures we are also to love as neighbors from God.

Baptism as Primary Ordination

While ordination to the pastoral office is essential for the life and mission of the church to ensure faithful oversight and stewardship of the ministry of Word and Sacrament, there is a growing theological opinion that we need to begin to view baptism as the universal or primary ordination for all Christians. For example, Luther wrote: "In fact, we are all consecrated priests through baptism, as St. Peter in 1 Peter 2 says, 'You are a royal priesthood and a priestly kingdom.'" Affirming baptism as the primary ordination lends significance and status to all the baptized as ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This does not diminish the importance of pastoral ministry. Rather it provides the condition by which pastors can serve in life-giving partnership with all members of the body of Christ. It also provides a needed reminder to pastors of the other roles and responsibilities they bear as they minister in the other arenas of daily life beyond their pastoral service.

Baptismal Call

Through baptism each person receives a call to ministry that is lived out in distinctive roles and relationships of daily life. The arenas of daily life provide the locations in which the baptized live out that call. The baptismal call to ministry in daily life involves both privileges and responsibilities. The privileges are based on the gifts of the Gospel freely received from God in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. The responsibilities are articulated in the Affirmation of Baptism rite: 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.

Baptismal Covenant

At baptism God makes a covenant with the baptized person. God in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit bestows upon the baptized forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation as gifts. The baptized person in grateful response to God's generosity is extended a call to ministry in daily life as articulated in the Affirmation of Baptism rite: 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.

Book of Faith Initiative

A grassroots initiative within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to encourage all members of our congregations, from children to adults, to dig deeper into our book of faith, the Bible. This is an approach embracing a common vision in which all are invited to open scripture and join the conversation. Each community is encouraged to decide how the Book of Faith Initiative will become a vital part of its own ministry.

Call

God's invitation to every baptized person to listen for God's voice, claim one's gifts, discern how to share those gifts, and engage in service to the neighbor.

Calling

How the baptized person responds to God's call by living out a Christian vocation through ministry in daily life.

Creation as Neighbor

A world that is facing unprecedented ecological crises summons forth a new interpretation of the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-39). Earth, sky, and waters, together with all flora and fauna have been created by God for us to love as our neighbors. We exist in inextricable interdependence with all created matter and all living things. Future generations depend upon our learning to love creation as our neighbor.

Daily Life

The baptized are summoned to service of God in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit not only through their involvements on behalf of their congregation, as important as these forms of service remain. Rather, the call to ministry extends into all the spheres of influence in which the baptized find themselves, seven days a week, twenty four hours a day.

Deacon/Diaconal Minister

A baptized minister called to Word and Service ministry on behalf of the church. This ministry involves the proclamation and teaching of the Word of God and service to the neighbor in particular areas of specialization. Deacons/diaconal ministers perform a twofold service in the life of the church: 1) to offer their own gifts in service to neighbors in their particular areas of specialization and 2) to serve as a catalyst in the life of the church, in order that all the baptized are equipped and empowered for their own ministries of word and service.

Diakonia

Derived from Greek, the ministry or service offered on behalf of one's neighbor.

Discernment

The process by which one reflects upon one's call to ministry from God. All baptized persons are called by God to ministry and are given gifts to be shared in service to neighbors. All baptized persons are encouraged to engage in faith practices and to participate in Christian community to assist in this process of reflection upon one's call to ministry.

Life of Faith Initiative

A grassroots initiative emerging among members, congregations, and synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to encourage all congregation members, from children to adults, to claim their call to ministry in daily life. The initiative embraces a common vision expressed in the theme: "Trusting Jesus. Serving Our Neighbors." Each community is encouraged to decide how the Life of Faith Initiative will become a vital part of its own ministry.

Ministry

A translation of the Greek word, *diakonia*, the service offered on behalf one's neighbors.

Ministry by the Baptized

One of the central tenets of the Reformation involved Luther's affirmation of the universal priesthood (sometimes referred to as the priesthood of all believers). This affirmation, however, has remained an unfulfilled promise of the Reformation, insofar as Lutheran churches developed and perpetuated their own forms of ministerial hierarchy. The Life of Faith Initiative aims to reinvigorate the focus on ministry by all the baptized at the observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

Ministry in Daily Life

This term encompasses all the ways that the baptized are involved in service to neighbors in their spheres of influence. The all-inclusive character of the *diakonia* of the baptized is expressed in the following three claims: 1) Ministry Is Daily Life, 2) Daily Life Is Ministry, and 3) You Are a Minister.

Missional Church

A renewal movement within Christianity at the end of the Christendom era, which focuses on the mission of Triune God (*missio Dei*) as the reason for the church's existence. The church is not an end in itself but an agent of God's mission. While this renewal movement has primarily given attention to the development of focused mission on the part of congregations, the Life of Faith Initiative seeks to give attention to the ministry by the baptized in their arenas of daily life as the primary focus for what it means to be missional church in our time.

Neighbor

Based on the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-39), a Christian term referring to all the people we encounter in the arenas of our daily lives. When Jesus was asked, "Who is my neighbor?" he responded by telling the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Jesus concluded the parable by saying: "Go and do likewise!" In this age of environmental crisis, we do well also to understand creation itself and all creatures as our neighbors.

Neighborliness of All Believers

After the Reformation the term, "priesthood of all believers," was a radical claim about the equal status of all believers before God based on baptism. The priesthood of all believers was intended to overcome the dependency of the laity on the ministrations of a clerical hierarchy. One problem with contemporary references to the priesthood of all believers is that it appears to infer that in order to have real status as a minister one should become a "priest," that is, an ordained pastor. The neighborliness of all believers builds on the original intention of the priesthood of all believers concept, but emphasizes the equal status of all believers before God in relation to the service of neighbors. All believers in Christ are equally called to serve the neighbors God gives them in their spheres of influence.

Pastor

A baptized minister called to Word and Sacrament ministry on behalf of the church. This ministry involves the preaching and teaching of the Word of God and stewardship of a congregation's sacramental ministry at worship and in pastoral care. Pastors perform a twofold service in the life of the church: 1) to preach and teach the Word of God and administer the sacraments, so that the baptized are set free *from* all bondage that prevents them from being the persons God created them to be and 2) to preach and teach the Word of God and administer the sacraments, so that the baptized are set free *for* serving the neighbors God gives them as ministers in their daily lives.

Priesthood of All Believers

Although not used expressly by Luther, this term functions as a synonym with Luther's usage of "universal priesthood." The limitation of the term is related to the implication that real ministry is what is

done by “priests.” For this reason some have begun to refer to “the neighborliness of all believers” to emphasize that ministry belongs to all the baptized in their service to others in the arenas of daily life.

Roles and Relationships

The baptized live out their calling by serving their neighbors in their arenas of daily life. For example, in the family the baptized serve as ministers to their neighbors as a son/daughter, sister/brother, or parent. In the workplace or in school, the baptized serve neighbors in the particular stations held in those arenas. In the local community, the baptized offer ministry, for example, through volunteer work, caring for creation, or by participating in the political process. The baptized offer ministry globally, for example, through relationships of accompaniment, generosity in sharing, and social advocacy.

Scattered Church/Gathered Church

The Life of Faith Initiative places primary focus on how the baptized are ministers and do ministry when they are sent from the church building into the world. In the congregation we assemble for worship, teaching and learning, community building, and organizing mission activities together with other congregation members. However, the primary focus of a truly missional church involves intentional efforts by the congregation to equip the baptized for ministry in daily life (Ephesians 4:11-16). This change of focus requires a paradigm shift from primary attention on what the congregation does when it is gathered to how it lives out ministry each and every day when the baptized are scattered into their arenas of daily life. The use of the terms, “gathered ministers and scattered ministers” and “gathered ministries and scattered ministries,” affirms the mutuality in ministry of both laity and clergy, clarifying the call and service rendered by all God’s people.

Servanthood

Jesus “came not to be served but to serve, and to give us life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). After Jesus had washed the feet of his disciples, he said to them: “Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you” (John 13:12-15). The baptized are called to follow Jesus in such ministry of service to neighbors in the arenas of daily life.

Service

A translation of the Greek word, *diakonia*, the ministry offered on behalf one’s neighbors.

Spheres of Influence

A comprehensive term to describe every arena of daily life in which the baptized can exercise their roles and relationships in ministry to their neighbors.

Universal Priesthood

Martin Luther’s term to describe the equal status of all baptized persons before God in Christ. As Luther wrote: “In fact, we are all consecrated priests through baptism, as St. Peter in 1 Peter 2 says, ‘You are a royal priesthood and a priestly kingdom.’” The term affirms the equal value of all forms of ministry offered by the baptized for the common good in service of neighbors.

Vocation

The primary calling of Christians to live out the covenant God in Christ made with them 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.

Word and Sacrament Ministry

This form of service finds its proper expression in relation to the ministry of all the baptized in their daily lives. This ministry involves the preaching and teaching of the Word of God and stewardship of a congregation's sacramental ministry at worship and in pastoral care. Pastors perform a twofold service in the life of the church: 1) to preach and teach the Word of God and administer the sacraments, so that the baptized are set free *from* all bondage that prevents them from being the persons God created them to be and 2) to preach and teach the Word of God and administer the sacraments, so that the baptized are set free *for* serving the neighbors God gives them as ministers in their daily lives.

Word and Service Ministry

This form of *diakonia* finds its proper expression in relation to the ministry of all the baptized in their daily lives. This ministry involves the proclamation and teaching of the Word of God and service to the neighbor in particular areas of specialization. Deacons/diaconal ministers perform a twofold service in the life of the church: 1) to offer their own gifts in service to neighbors in their particular areas of specialization and 2) to serve as a catalyst in the life of the church, in order that all the baptized are equipped and empowered for their own ministries of word and service.

Worship as Formation for Life

The liturgy is not only “the work of the people” in service to God but even more the means of grace by which God in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit is forming and equipping the worshiper for ministry in daily life. Each element of the worship service functions as formation in life practices that are lived out in service to the neighbor when the gathered church becomes the scattered church in the sending at the culmination of the liturgy.

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