



Extended Fall Introduction to the Holy Innovations Project

Life of Faith leaders will provide an extended introduction to the initiative and the Holy Innovations process over the course of several weeks this fall.

In order to make this as flexible as possible, and to maximize the opportunity to engage in conversation, Life of Faith leaders will pre-record teaching segments for each of three sessions. Guiding Teams and their coaches will meet at a time of their choosing (in person would be best, with the coach telecommuting, but this could be done on Zoom as well) to watch the recorded teaching sessions and discuss assigned questions.

All teams will then meet via Zoom to report in from their conversations and to ask questions. This process will be repeated three times over the course of six weeks: watch the teaching sessions and discuss the questions for session one, then meet via Zoom to report in. Then over the next two weeks, meet to watch and discuss session two then report in. Repeat for the third session.

The dates for the reporting-in sessions are Thursdays, September 21, October 5 and 19 at 7:00 pm Central. The sessions will be recorded for those who are not able to attend in person. This means the guiding teams will need to set a day and time to meet to watch and discuss each session as follows:

Session One: between September 4 and 20

Session Two: between September 22 and October 4

Session Three: between October 6 and 18

The content of these meetings will be:

Session One: Paradigm shifts and the importance of language

This session will once again state the reason for the project: there is a gap between faith and daily life. It will also state the promise: Congregations that make the paradigm shift from valuing and supporting what members do in and through the congregation to affirming and equipping the baptized for all that God is doing for the sake of the neighbor in and through our daily lives will experience vitality and renewal. It will then explore the depth and complexity of making that paradigm shift, which entails understanding a congregation's culture (that which may be hidden from sight but drives our expectations and actions), the difference between changing a congregation's culture (v. changing its systems), and the importance of language.

Objectives for the first session:

1. Be able to name the key challenges that lock your congregation in a programmatic (consumeristic) model of ministry, and understand the complexity of becoming a congregation that affirms and supports all that God is doing for the sake of the neighbor in and through our daily lives.
2. Identify language changes that empower us to live into the reality that the church exists both as a gathered and a scattered people, and that our ministries happen both through our congregational activities and through our daily lives (with an emphasis, for now, on the latter).

3. Begin to explore ways that you might focus on the first steps in making the needed culture change.

Session Two: A theological foundation for grace and vocation

This session focuses on the centrality of justification by grace through faith and baptismal vocation in Lutheran theology. Baptism is the primary ordination to ministry for all Christians, which is lived out in the arenas of daily life: family, workplace, local community, and citizenship. The Lutheran tradition has never adequately implemented Luther's vision for the universal priesthood of all the baptized, something being reclaimed through the Life of Faith Initiative. Our formation for living out our baptismal vocation in all our roles and relationships in life begins with the practices of worship. Worship practices form us for discipleship as Christians as we are sent from worship into service. In the five Affirmation of Baptism promises, we commit ourselves both to this formation and to living a life of faith for neighbors in the world.

Objectives for the second session:

1. To understand the grounding of baptismal vocation in Lutheran theology and the failure to fully embody this in Lutheran practice.
2. To interpret a theology of worship that receives the practices of worship as formation for daily life practices.
3. To appropriate the five Affirmation of Baptism promises as instruction for discipleship as a way of life.

Session Three: Keys for the journey ahead

In the first two sessions you had an opportunity to discuss the faith and real life gap and to engage more deeply our theological responses to this challenge of grace and vocation. In this session you'll get a chance to examine one congregation's now 9-year journey toward bridging the gap. The session will focus on how this congregation understood the challenges, the keys for impact from their experience, and naming the worldview challenge. While there will be practical programmatic connections, the hope is that this session will invite each participating congregation to go further in articulating the unique challenges in their context, to get clear on the keys for impact as they start to move towards shaping their own approach, and to begin grappling with the reality that the worldview coming out of the Gospel will need to be named and taught.

Objectives for the third session:

1. To hear how Westwood Lutheran Church understands the faith and real life challenges they face and how that frames what they are doing programmatically. Each congregation will be invited to further articulate their challenges so that they are clearer on what they will be trying to address in this project, whether they are similar to or different from Westwood.
2. Learn about the keys Westwood believes are important to have lasting impact over time. This background will provide a further foundation upon which to build each congregation's unique approach.
3. To name the worldview challenge and explore how this may be playing out in each congregation.