Teaching the Bible with Children, Youth and Families

UNIT 2: Service and Learning

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INTRODUCTION

We are grateful to The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) for engaging in a major initiative to encourage its members to read and study the Bible. The initiative, called *The Book of Faith*, invites everyone to, “Open Scripture. Join the Conversation.” This course is an expression of that initiative. It is designed and intended for use in all Christian congregations and communities of faith.

The seeds for this course were planted by a group of lay and professional Christian educators sitting around a table, late at night during a 2009 ELCA Lifelong Learning Partners gathering in Carefree, AZ. Their passion and concern for 'opening the Bible with children, youth & their families' is the heart of this series. The first unit of this series, Equipping *Households of Faith*, focused on how children, youth and families could encounter scripture in the home with an emphasis on nurturing and passing on the Christian faith to the next generation. The focus of Unit 2 is encountering the living Christ through service and mission as we accompany one another locally and globally. This unit is especially helpful for households and those working with children and youth, mission developers, Companion Synod and Global Mission teams, evangelism teams and pastors.

OVERVIEW

The Unit 2 in this series focuses on encountering scripture through the call to serve our neighbor as Christ loved and served us.

*Service and Learning* comprises five sessions plus a bonus session:

1. Who is My Neighbor? Accompaniment Locally and Globally
2. Cultivating Lives of Service and Compassion in the Home
3. Engaging All Generations for Service and Learning
5. Mission: More than a Trip

Desired outcomes for the participants:
- Inspired to restore and care for God’s world, working for justice and peace.
- Encouraged to move from current practices of “doing” to “being” and walking along side “the other” as we serve locally and globally.
- Move from age segregation to all ages gathered to hear God’s story, share God’s story and be God’s story at church, in the community, the world and at home.
- Renewed sense of the role of the church and home in service, mission and outreach.
- Equipped with tools and resources for effective serving and learning that are based on the Biblical narrative, a theology for serving, research, and presenter’s personal stories.
Course Resources

Each of the six DVD sessions includes:
- Video Presentation (20-25 minutes)
- Facilitator Guide (three to four-pages)
- Participant Learning Guide (two-pages)
- Bibliography, References and Resources

In each video presentation you will hear from someone who is known for his or her knowledge and experience with the topic. The presenter will provide ideas for service and learning in the home, the congregation or local and global community. All the people you will meet have one thing in common – a passion for God’s story in Jesus as the source for service and learning!

The format for each session includes:
- Welcome and Opening Prayer
- Preparation Questions
- Viewing the Video
- Discussion and Simple, Interactive Activities
- Make It My Own-Take It Home (A three-step planning process)
- Closing Prayer

Learning Guides are provided for each session. One set is for the facilitator with suggestions for group discussion and purposeful interaction. Accompanying handouts are available for the participants. Participants, guided by the facilitator, are encouraged to explore the content more deeply and absorb each session for themselves.

Each session is designed for a 50-60 minute period of group time. For shorter periods of time, the facilitator may select fewer questions from each section of the Learning Guide. There is also material for extended conversation or additional sessions. Each session includes a list of resources and a bibliography. The planning team and participants are encouraged to explore these as time and interest allows.

Make It My Own-Take It Home is the last section for each session. Spend at least a few minutes in this section each time you meet. If the goal is for participants to gain knowledge and skills for strengthening service and learning as a means for transforming one’s faith, then spending time to reflect and plan next steps is essential.

The steps utilized in the Take It Home section, are based on a framework described in-depth by Eugene Roehlkepartain in several publications from Search Institute. Asking “What?” “So What” and “Now What” is utilized in each session. This reflective learning process is especially appropriate with youth and also a key component of intentional service-learning.

What? The opportunity to look back and focus on what one experienced.

So What? A question to help interpret one’s experience and encourage broader meaning.

Now What? Explores the possibilities for change and shapes the future.
PREPARATION

A session can be hosted at church, in someone's home or wherever an already established group might be meeting to prepare for a service project or mission trip. Welcoming participants and helping them to feel at ease is part of hospitality and essential for an effective learning environment.

Prepare the Space

• Arrange the space so everyone can see and hear the DVD presentation. The chairs may need to face one direction to view the DVD, then rearranged into a circle, horseshoe shape or around tables for conversation. This is a discussion based learning process. The ability to see and hear one another is important.

• Set-up and test the DVD or any electronic equipment you are using. Cue up the session and have it ready to go. Nothing is more frustrating or time consuming than technology that doesn't work.

• Set up newsprint and/or white board with appropriate markers.

• Create a Gathering Table to convey the theme and focus for each session. On the table place a candle and a Bible. The Facilitator's Guide will suggest additional items you might add to the table, unique to each session. Remember that some people are visual learners and others are auditory, verbal and kinesthetic. Since we vary in how we access information, it is best to plan for a variety of learning styles.

Welcome and Hospitality

• Have someone greet participants as they arrive. Even if participants know one another, have nametags prepared. Always expect guests and first time visitors.

• Copy the Participant Learning Guide, one for each person. Provide writing utensils and extra paper for notes.

• Ask participants to briefly introduce themselves. If time permits, invite participants to share why they are attending the course. Each time you gather include a non-threatening question that will help people get acquainted and build relationships.

• Prior to the session, invite someone to prepare an opening prayer or a devotion that builds on the Biblical call to service.

• Decide if food and beverage will be a part of your gatherings. Plan to meet various health and dietary needs.
Facilitation Process for Small Group Discussion

The group discussion is a series of questions or simple activities based on the video just viewed. Some people are natural at reflecting and sharing in a group. For many reasons, others are more hesitant or less comfortable. Individuals process information in many different ways, so intentionally incorporate a variety of learning methods. (Facilitators may want to view Teaching the Bible, Hosting the Conversation, another Select Learning course, which examines the dynamics of adult learning and enhances teaching skills.)

Here are some simple tips for the planning team and facilitator(s) to follow in creating an environment that invites people of all ages to reflect and respond in a variety of ways:

- Create sacred and safe space. First, let people know that they always have permission to “pass” on any question or exercise you invite them to do. Simply ask people to say, “pass” and to continue to participate by listening. Second, ask people to honor one another's sharing by not sharing what they hear beyond the group gathered, unless it is their own story.

- If there are eight or more participants in your group, divide people into smaller groups or huddles for some of the discussion questions.

- “Turn to the person sitting next to you and share . . .” is a fine approach for questions that can be answered briefly and each participant would be comfortable answering. This also works when time is short.

- For questions with the goal of more in-depth personal sharing, divide people into groups of three, four or no more than five. If a group is larger than five, it is difficult for some to hear and it takes too much time to share. If there are only two in a group, one may be a non-talker and that may create an uncomfortable situation for the two participants.

- Invite people to write down a few words or draw an image in response to a question. This invites those who are less verbal or who need to think before they respond to feel more at ease and included.

- Whether people are in small groups or one large group, always provide a few moments of quiet for people to think of their response before you invite open sharing. There are folks who immediately know what they want to share and begin talking as soon as the facilitator has asked the question, while others in the group are still contemplating what they might say. This step provides the “gift of sharing and listening” for everyone.

- Mutual Invitation, a process created by Eric Law, is a means for the facilitator to share the “power,” of deciding who speaks next. One person shares a response to the selected question, then that person invites the next one to share, continuing until all have had the opportunity to speak. Even if someone chooses to pass, they still have the privilege of selecting the next speaker.
• To add a fun and tactile element to the flow of conversation, provide a soft round object that can be easily handled and passed from one speaker to the next. Something like a hacky-sack or "stress-ball. In some cultures a person has the floor to speak as long as they hold the designated object, this is referred to as a “talking stick.”

• Always inform people if the content of their small group conversation will later be summarized for sharing with the entire group.

• When appropriate, list responses to group questions on newsprint or a white board. This provides a visual element to the learning process.

The Planning Team

Finally, if possible, create an intergenerational team to assist in preparing, presenting and facilitating the Service and Learning course. Invite people of all ages to join the team based on their gifts. One approach is to have a youth and an adult who share similar gifts serve together. Involving many people in the planning will generate energy and excitement for the course. Listed below are a number of team roles. Each role may be filled by a separate individual/pair or one person/pair may have multiple roles.

Team Chair

- Ability to formulate, direct, coordinate and carry out a plan for a specific purpose.
- Gift of administration.

Facilitator(s)

- Will one person be present at all the sessions? Do you need a back up?
- Consider having male and female co-facilitators so different voices and perspectives are heard. Include youth as co-facilitators.
- Take time to watch the DVD and prepare for each session. Check that handouts are ready for each session, even if prepared by someone else.
- Look for the following qualities: a pleasant speaking voice, able to make everyone in a group feel safe, able to deal with the “talk-too-much” person as well as draw out the “quiet and thinking” type, and sensitive to group dynamics.
- The gift of confidence to step forward, give directions and motivate people to participate and be inspired.

AV/Technology

- Someone who will take care of all the AV details and will be non-plussed if anything goes wrong.
- The gift to create, maintain and make things work.
**Hospitality**
- People to meet and greet, prepare nametags, food and/or beverage, signs that direct people where to enter and location of room.
- Set-up and cleanup. Cleanliness of bathrooms and other public areas. Communication with staff responsible for facility maintenance or cooperation of others who care for the church or share your home.
- The gift to welcome and receive guests as Jesus would do.

**Chaplain or Intercessor**
- Prepares the prayer or devotion for the beginning of each session.
- The gift to pray with a certainty that we are well in God’s care.

**Gathering Table Coordinator**
- This person will be responsible for creating the Gathering Table, assembling and displaying items to set the theme and focus for each session.
- Gifts for organizing and helping behind the scenes.

**Promotion**
- How, where and to whom will the *Service and Learning* course be promoted?
- Posters, bulletin inserts, church newsletter, phone calls, local newspaper, personal invitation, temple talks, etc.
- A combination of the gifts of artistry, evangelism, writing and web mastery.

**Study Leader**
- As part of the role of host(s) for *Service and Learning*, reads or researches one or more of the books and resources listed in the bibliography for Unit 2.
- Gift of wisdom, knowledge and encouragement.
Conclusion

Service-learning is a lifestyle that permeates every aspect of our lives as Christians, from how we raise our children to be compassionate and caring, to how youth groups go on mission trips, to how we accompany our sisters and brothers down the street or across the world.

The commitment to service rises from the belief that all people have the capacity to be agents of God’s love by using their gifts and talents to serve their neighbor. Service, when linked with mutual respect and learning, has the power to transform us and engage us in the healing and restoration of a broken world.

Already in the early 1990’s as service projects and mission trips were becoming more and more popular, they were being challenged to be more than “doing good.” The attitude of “us” helping “them” was called into question. More than 20-years later, we still are finding our way as we serve and learn what it means to authentically accompany one another in Jesus name.

It is our fervent prayer that as we serve along side one another we will discover Jesus is already there - in the midst of us! We will also examine our lives, deepen our faith, and be God’s hands in restoring God’s world.

In this Unit on Service and Learning participants will hear God’s story, stories from presenters and from one another. We welcome your stories and feedback as you open your Bibles, engage in conversation and practice your faith in service and learning.


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Unit 2: Service and Learning

BIBLIOGRAPHY, REFERENCES and RESOURCES

The Study Guide for each session includes a list of the presenter's favorite resources for the specific topic addressed. A compiled list of resources from all six sessions is given here.

1. Who is My Neighbor? Accompaniment Locally and Globally
   
   Sunitha Mortha

Movies
The Mission             The Soloist       Arranged, 2007
Finding Nemo           Shrek, 2001

Resources for understanding Accompaniment

GLOCAL Gatherings. Two-day events scheduled across the USA in 2012:

Videos and downloadables from the Global Mission Unit of the E.L.C.A.

Welcome Forward - A Field Guide for Global Travel. Includes a CD with global songs.
http://resources.elca.org/Global_Mission-Welcome_Forward_Guide.html

Books offering a Christian Perspective Related to Poverty and Development

Bosch, David J. Transformers Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 1991. Shows how the concept of mission has changed from the OT, through the Reformation until now and calls for a new understanding which is broad and holistic. Considered to be the classic, modern text on missions.


Sider, Ron. *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: Moving from Affluence to Generosity*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997 edition. *If you are going to read one book on the topic of poverty and inequality this is it. Explores 1) the need in our world 2) what the Bible says is our responsibility and 3) how we as Christians can and should make a difference. Considered one of the most influential Christian books of the 20th century.*


**More of Sunitha’s Favorites:**


Also read anything written by:


Berry, Wendell. *Read any of his many poems and essays.*
2. Cultivating Lives of Service and Compassion in the Home

Marcia Bunge

Resources on Faith Formation and the Home


Resources on Religious Understandings of Children and Childhood


Theologies of Childhood and Home

Berryman, Jerome W. Children and the Theologians: Clearing the Way for Grace. New York, NY: Morehouse, 2009. An overview of what selected Christian theologians over the centuries have said about children. Author proposes his own doctrine of childhood that emphasizes children are a means of grace and full participants in the Church’s life.


3. Engaging All Generations for Service and Learning

*Linda Staats*

**General Research & Information on Generations**

**Www.fourthturning.com**
Links to the work of Strauss & Howe, generational experts, and a current blog.

**www.faithformationlearningexchange.net/lifelong--multigenerational**
Faith Formation Learning Exchange - a one-stop site for all things related to intergenerational ministry. Current and relevant.

**www.girlscouts.org**
Click on "Research." Current. Excellent.

**www.link2lead.com**
Generational data/demographics based on congregation's zip code.

**www.search-institute.org/congregations**
Many resources, specifically: *Creating Intergenerational Community: 75 Ideas for Building Relationships Between Youth and Adults.*

**wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Y**
Explanation of the generations and related web sites.

**http://www.pointsofviewinc.com/**
Points Of View is a company dedicated to bringing the five living generations together.

**Resources and Ideas for Bringing the Generations Together**


Seasons of the Spirit. www.spiritseasons.com


**Basic Reading List with a Generational Lens**


4. Serve to Learn. Learn to Serve
David Ellingson and Mark Jackson


ELCA World Hunger Program. [www.elca.org/hunger](http://www.elca.org/hunger)

ELCA Journeys for Youth and Young Adults (Servant Learning, High Adventure, and Alternative Spring Break Programs). [www.elca.org/camps/journeys.html](http://www.elca.org/camps/journeys.html)

National Service-Learning Clearinghouse. [www.servicelearning.org](http://www.servicelearning.org)

National Youth Leadership Council. [www.nylc.org](http://www.nylc.org)


Service and Learning Leadership Team (SALLT) Project at Trinity Lutheran College. Service learning training, videos, and resource links available at [www.sallt.org](http://www.sallt.org).


5. Mission: More than a Trip
Peggy Contos Hahn

Theological Foundation


Practical Resources


Great Stories to Expand One’s View

www.eymahgbowee.com/index.html


Prayers


Conversations with Eugene Roehlkepartain

Selected Resources Related to Service and Learning


Web Resources

Inspired to Serve: An Online Tool Kit for Youth-Led Interfaith Action (developed by Search Institute and Interfaith Youth Core) http://inspiredtoserve.org/

National Service-Learning Clearinghouse (section on faith-based service-learning) http://www.servicelearning.org/topic/demographics-settings/faith-based

Roehlkepartain worked closely with the late Dr. Peter L. Benson for 20 years in guiding Search Institute’s work on Developmental Assets, the growth of community transformation and, most recently, the introduction of the theory and research on youth thriving, with the central idea of the power of young people’s “sparks” or passions.
PROFESSIONAL PROFILES OF PRESENTERS

**Marcia J. Bunge** is Professor of Humanities and Theology at Christ College, the Honors College of Valparaiso University (Indiana); Director of the Child in Religion and Ethics Project; and the University’s W.C. Dickmeyer Professor. Her current area of research is religious understandings of children and childhood as reflected in: *The Child in Christian Thought* (Eerdmans, 2001); *The Child in the Bible* (Eerdmans, 2008); and *Children and Childhood in World Religions: Primary Sources and Texts* (Rutgers, 2009). Bunge served on the National Task Force on Education for the ELCA. [Marcia.Bunge@valpo.edu](mailto:Marcia.Bunge@valpo.edu)

**David Ellingson** is Professor of Children, Youth & Family Studies at Trinity Lutheran College in Everett, WA. He also directs the Service And Learning Leadership Team (SALLT) Project, an initiative to equip youth ministry leaders with training and resources to lead meaningful service and mission experiences. An ordained pastor for 40 years, Dave’s ministry has always involved youth and young adults, as a campus pastor, parish pastor, college and seminary professor, and youth ministry coordinator for ELCA Region 1. He holds a Master of Divinity from Yale Divinity School and a Doctor of Ministry from Claremont School of Theology. [david.ellingson@tlc.edu](mailto:david.ellingson@tlc.edu)

**Peggy Contos Hahn** lives in Houston and serves as Assistant to the Bishop of the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod. Peggy is dedicated to mobilizing people to reduce poverty, especially for children and youth. Peggy walks alongside Lutherans in Peru, El Salvador and The Central African Republic. Peggy serves on the 2012 ELCA Youth Gathering Management Team as a Coach to Team Leaders. She is also committed to leadership development of young people through Camp Hope Day Camp Ministries and The Disciple Project. [peggy@gulfcoastsynod.org](mailto:peggy@gulfcoastsynod.org)

**Mark Jackson** serves as Professor of Children, Youth & Family Studies and Director of the Center for Community Engagement at Trinity Lutheran College in Everett, WA. In addition to teaching courses in program planning and administration, he has a growing interest in how service experiences shape the adolescent faith journey. He is a trainer and writer with the Service And Learning Leadership Team (SALLT) Project, which promotes effective practices in leading youth service experiences through training, resources, and research. Mark has completed graduate studies in lay pastoral ministry at Gonzaga University and nonprofit management at Regis University. [mark.jackson@tlc.edu](mailto:mark.jackson@tlc.edu)

**Sunitha Mortha,** ordained through the Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church in India, serves as Director for Mission Formation & Relationships at the ELCA churchwide offices in Chicago, Ill. In her work at the ELCA, she has created programs and systems that have developed congregational capacities to critically explore worldviews, meta-narratives and cultures to motivate better practices of mission, globally and locally. She is committed to community building, mobilizing, and providing safe environments for difficult, complex conversations. The Glocal Mission Gatherings ([www.elca.org/glocals](http://www.elca.org/glocals)) and Accompaniment resources reflect her work. [Sunitha.Mortha@elca.org](mailto:Sunitha.Mortha@elca.org)
Eugene C. Roehlkepartain is acting president and CEO of Search Institute, Minneapolis, Minnesota, an independent nonprofit organization. Gene joined Search Institute’s staff in 1991 and has written, edited, or collaborated on more than 30 books and resources that provide leadership and knowledge to promote healthy children, youth and families in our schools, communities and congregations. Because of his childhood in Africa, Gene has led Search Institute’s work to support culturally appropriate asset-building efforts around the world. Roehlkepartain has a bachelor’s degree from Baylor University, Waco, Texas. He is pursuing his doctorate in Education, Curriculum, and Instruction—Family, Youth, and Community at the University of Minnesota. gener@search-institute.org

Linda Staats holds a MS degree in Human Development and the Family. She combines research, theology and people’s own holy stories to engage and empower all generations for serving at home and in the world. She is passionate about congregations bringing generations together to nurture faith and accompany one another in daily life. Her career reflects her joy of teaching, equipping and supporting others. Linda serves half time as Assistant to the Bishop for Youth & Household Ministry in the Rocky Mountain Synod-ELCA, is a member of the ELCA Book of Faith Leadership Team and a Track Leader for the ELCA Glocal Gatherings. linda@homegrownfaith.net