

ELC Adult Study: “Knowing our Neighbors: Unsettling History, Hopeful Future”

Session 1 Questions for Reflection and Discussion

(Note: We are using the “Talking Circle” as our model for discussion. We will pass an object (stone) throughout the process. You may choose to speak or not – completely up to you. All are equal in the circle and respect for all views/ideas is paramount).

1. Reflecting on the Focus Scripture: Matthew 22: 36-40

“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

What divides “neighbors” in our present environment? How should we respond as Christians?

2. From the ELCA Website (regarding Multi-Ethnic Ministries)

“Members of the ELCA believe that Christ’s church is not ours to control, nor is it our job to sort, divide, categorize or exclude. Our faith liberates us to embrace each person in their wholeness — questions, complexities, ethnicity, culture and all.”

By looking at various “groups” or people who may have been marginalized in our history, is the ELCA, in fact, categorizing? Is it your sense that the ELCA is, in fact, open and welcoming to all people?

3. In your estimation, are the arguments over our history helpful for our culture? Why or why not?
4. How would Jesus respond to the “Doctrine of Discovery?”
5. The repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery by the ELCA in 2016 was based, in part, on the idea that the DOD clearly violated Article 28 of the Augsburg Confession, summarized here: “There is a distinction that must be made between spiritual and temporal power. Both are important and are established by God, but they must be kept separate from one another since their roles are distinct and different. Many serious problems have resulted in confusing these roles.”

Why is the mixing of temporal and spiritual power dangerous in our world?

6. REFLECTION: What is the most challenging thing you learned in session 1 regarding the topic of our study?