



book of faith

Open Scripture. Join the Conversation.

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The Book of Faith Initiative is a continuing emphasis of the ELCA dedicated to helping individuals, congregations, and institutions throughout the church to renew and enrich our broad and deep engagement with Scripture for our own sakes and for the sake of the world.

From the beginning, the goal of the initiative has been two fold:

- 1) to meet the continuing challenge of widespread biblical illiteracy and
- 2) to renew the teaching of our rich Lutheran heritage of scriptural understanding, interpretation, and engagement.

The Book of Faith Initiative (BFI) has operated using a decentralized, grassroots approach centered on our common vision in which all are invited to open Scripture and join the conversation.

The initiative has emphasized that biblical engagement is greatly enriched by the use of “multiple methods” in conversation with the text and other persons. The suggested “methods” have centered on four different ways of reading the Bible and asking questions: devotional, historical, literary and Lutheran theological reading.

In its initial five years, BFI-sponsored activities have happened in a variety of congregations, synods, churchwide events, lay schools, and more. As full partners, Augsburg Fortress has published more than 160 Book of Faith resources including Foundational Courses, Seasonal Courses (Advent and Lenten Journeys), *Books of Faith*, *Together in Faith*, *People of Faith*, *Making Sense of . . .* Series, and the *Lutheran Study Bible*.

The Book of Faith Initiative has developed an ongoing Web presence. The bookoffaith.org site houses many of our resources, ideas for engagement, and more. BFI is active on Facebook and Twitter as people continue to share ideas, resources, and successes.

In partnership with many other churchwide ministries, BFI has developed materials for use in various ELCA ministry settings including:

Story Matters: Naming, Claiming, and Living Our Biblical Identity -- developed in partnership with Faith Practices and Mission Development Leaders.

A Biblical Conversation with II Corinthians 7:16, 8:1-7 -- a “Rediscovering Macedonia” resource was developed with stewardship leaders.

Road to Shalom -- developed (and now posted for more widespread use) for the 2012 Youth Gathering.

A number of Book of Faith resources including: *How Lutherans Interpret the Bible, Teaching the Bible; Hosting the Conversation, Teaching the Bible with Children, Youth and Families: Equipping Households of Faith* and *Teaching the Bible with Children, Youth and Families: Service and Learning* -- developed with Select Learning.

THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK OF FAITH INITIATIVE IS TO INCREASE BIBLICAL LITERACY AND FLUENCY FOR THE SAKE OF THE WORLD.

From the beginning, the Book of Faith Initiative was envisioned to be more than a theme or emphasis that would be succeeded by other emphases. Rather, the intent was and is to form practices and customs in this church that will open it to a new level of valuing and being shaped by the power of the Word.

While much has been accomplished, much work remains. Productive and lasting change in practices and customs takes time. Old challenges have deepened, and new challenges have arisen.

The new challenges that are currently serving to shape our future work in partnership with many leaders across the church are:

- Continued biblical illiteracy.
- The twin challenges of American biblicism and American secularism.
- The role of Bible in mission outreach.
- The need to address and learn from the great variety of cultures that make up this church and world.
- The growing number of persons in society claiming to be “spiritual but not religious.”
- The need for creative use of social media.
- The importance of family and home as centers of faith development.

We also need to encourage engagement of the Book of Faith Initiative by the colleges, universities, and seminaries of this church, recognizing the continuing challenge of assisting pastoral and lay leaders in taking up their roles as teachers of the Bible in ways that engage and inspire the current and future members and seekers in this church.

We invite everyone in the ELCA involved in faithful engagement with the Bible, whatever your context or resources might be, to see your work as contributing toward fulfilling the goals of this initiative. Whenever we faithfully and fruitfully engage the Scriptures we are a Book of Faith church!

We continue to give thanks to God for all of the individuals, congregations, synods, and churchwide ministries for their deep and abiding commitment to the centrality of God’s transforming Word in Christ, in proclamation, and in Scripture.



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