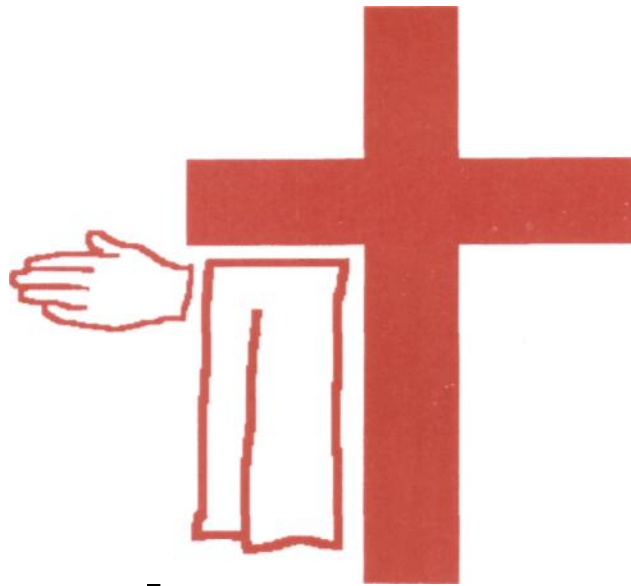


# diakonia

## Program Overview and Course Descriptions



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### Program Overview and Course Descriptions

#### What is diakonia?

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**diakonia** is a two year process of spiritual formation and theological education for baptized members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or anyone wishing in good faith to study these teachings. This process occurs in three basic ways:

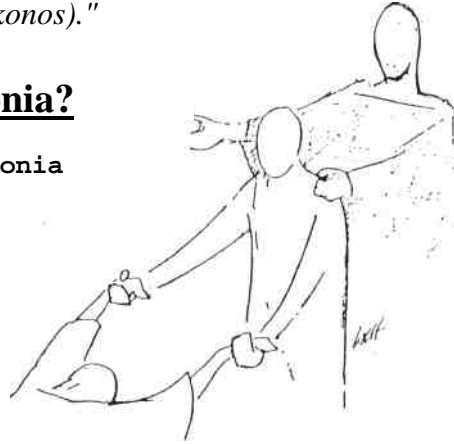
- By thorough grounding in the classic church-leadership disciplines of practical, systematic, historical and Biblical theology;
- By identifying particular skills and aptitudes in ministry, and encouraging their use in the local parish;
- By providing spiritual growth through worship, retreats, and a supportive community of fellow students, mentors and

instructors.

These are the tools **diakonia** uses to help equip God's people for service in parish and neighborhood ministries. The primary theme and focus of the **diakonia** experience is the word of Jesus in scripture (e.g. Mark 10:43): "Let the one who would be great among you be your servant (Greek: *diakonos*)."

## What is the emphasis of diakonia?

The purpose and goal of the diakonia program is to provide each participant the opportunity to discover their God-given gifts, strengthen their faith and their abilities, and give them purpose within their own congregations, synods, and the church-wide body of Christ. Through the diakonia educational experience, each student's understanding of theology and their relationship to God is allowed to blossom and bear fruit as a light of Christ in society.



**diakonia** emphasizes the baptismal vocation of all Christians to serve as did our Lord Jesus. Participants are often already leaders in their parishes, and have a high degree of commitment to the ministry of the Church. They want to deepen their life of faith and ground their baptismal commitment to serve in the church through a variety of ways. They are committed to serve through the Church in a variety of ways: teaching, administration, liturgical leadership, action for social justice, evangelism, visitation of the sick, community organization, youth work, ministry among the elderly, and the like. In every way they seek, and are helped by **diakonia**, to grow closer to the image and example of Christ the servant and to be more comfortable in bearing witness in word and deed about the good news of Jesus Christ.

## How is diakonia structured?

The **diakonia** curriculum consists of twelve courses, six per academic year. Each course is 5 sessions in length, and meets weekly for 3 hour sessions. All of the courses are introductory in nature. Weekly readings give students a solid background to the topic. Either weekly assignments or a final assignment will relate the subject matter to the students' context of life and ministry (family, parish, neighborhood area of ministry) or give them new insight into the course's content. Students work at their own level, and assignments reflect the understanding that students are already busy in their families, jobs and parish. Typically, students

average approximately three to five hours of study per week in addition to class time.

### **How much does diakonia cost?**

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- 1) Tuition: \$360 per year (for the two year program) If tuition is paid up front, pro rated refunds are given for students who withdraw from the program. Tuition may be paid by class. diakonia has a financial aid program.
  
- 2) Books: Actual costs vary from course to course, but instructors try to use books and materials totaling \$25.-30. or less per course. Students have an option of buying their own materials used.
  
- 3) Retreats: The number of retreats is determined by year, normally there is one. Retreat costs will vary by location.
  
- 4) Fees: A non refundable registration fee of \$25 is required at time of registration. An additional fee of \$25-40 at the conclusion of the program covers graduation expenses, including the presentation of a commemorative **diakonia** cross.

diakonia™

## **Course Descriptions**

**Two years of formation**

**Twelve, five-session courses**

### **Series A**

#### **A1. Introduction to the New Testament**

The goals of this course are to understand the gospel message as revealed in the New Testament; to explore the life and faith of the Christian church in the first century; to understand how the Bible came down to us in its present form and to understand and use a variety of tools for interpreting the Bible. Throughout the course, students will reflect how the New Testament Gospel has shaped our Christian lives.

#### **A2. Church History - The First 400 Years**

The purpose of this course is to help students understand the doctrinal, liturgical, and organizational development of the Christian tradition in its first four centuries. The internal and external political, cultural and religious forces which shaped our church and our statements of faith are covered. The course concludes with the unification of Christian thought in the Creeds.

#### **A3. Practical Ministry I: Biblical Images of the Life of the Church (*diakonia, koinonia, leitiurgia, kerygma*)**

In this course each Biblical image is examined for its meaning and usage in the New Testament. Students will consider the implications for the life of congregations and their ministries. These concepts are related to the ongoing work of preaching, teaching, counseling, worship, social ministry and acts of mercy carried out individually and corporately by the Church and her servants. They are studied in their interrelatedness, all centered in the “Great Commission” given to us by Christ.

This course also introduces the idea of Baptismal vocation, the priesthood of all believers and that we all have gifts that may be used. Teachers may spend time helping students discern their own possible gifts for ministry and service to the church and world.

#### **A4. Lutheran Creeds and Confessions**

The history and content of the Book of Concord are at the heart of this course. Special emphasis is placed on the Augsburg Confession and Apology, the Catechisms and Smalcald Articles, as well as the New Testament books of Romans, Ephesians, and Galatians. Topics include: God and Sin, Justification by Grace Alone, Church and Ministry, Sacraments, and others. Parish constitutions may be studied to show relation of confessional documents to modern Lutheranism.

### **A5. Practical Ministry II: Visitation (the sick, the homebound, the grieving)**

This course has two components. First, students will be provided the opportunity to make at least one supervised visit in an institution and/or to the homebound. Class sessions will deal with understanding the needs of patients and loved ones, as well as issues such as grieving and patients' rights.

Second, besides a sharing of practical issues relating to this ministry, this course will also provide opportunities to relate visitation ministry to the theology and worship life of the Church. The role of the Eucharistic Minister may also be explored. During this course, students may discern whether or not they have a gift for visitation.

### **A6. The Daily Life of a Christian**

This practical theology course will explore the meaning of Christian discipleship in daily life. The course will help the student to balance their baptismal vocation and calling in Christian life with family and personal life, church-related service and the world of work. Special attention will be given to the theology of sanctification, the Reformation and Luther's understanding of baptismal vocation, the relation of the justified life of faith to good works, financial stewardship, and the disciplines, which support discipleship such as daily prayer.

## **Series B**

### **B1. Introduction to the Old Testament**

The aims of this course are: to give the students an overview of the structure and theology of the Hebrew Scriptures and present the varieties of forms used to communicate the truth of God's Word contained in them. Special attention will be given to the covenant theology and to relating Old Testament theology and history to our understanding of the New Testament.

### **B2. Christian Doctrine**

This course has several main objectives: to introduce students to Systematic Theology, present a vision of the coherence of Christian beliefs to each other, help identify foundational doctrines, give an understanding of orthodoxy and heresy, gain an understanding of the communal and historic nature of doctrines and their spiritual foundations, and to help students understand and express why disciplined thought and faithful confession is crucial for church leaders.

### **B3. Lutheran Faith in the American Context**

The purpose of this course is to provide an overview of the history of the Lutheran church in America over the last 385 years, comparing past struggles and themes with issues in our church today, paying special attention to themes of immigration and assimilation (inclusion/exclusion/language), mission and outreach, authority, and identity.

### **B4. Practical Ministry III: To Communicate the Gospel**

This class will explore the role of the parish community of Word and Sacraments as the context for ministry, the source from which the Christian witness flows. Attention will also be paid to identifying 21st century situations where communication of the Gospel is essential, and how this communication may occur. The focus of this course is to look at opportunities within the parish for communicating the gospel (Bible studies, teaching, youth ministries, etc) as well as in the community (various forms of evangelism, welcoming visitors and new members, etc).

Underlying the course is the perspective of each student in developing diaconal self-understanding. We will explore together the particular gifts and strengths each student possesses and the ways in which these gifts are communicated in today's world. Students will share personal ministry experiences of how they uniquely communicate the gospel in their lives, and reflect on them both Biblically and theologically. In short, the course will help students explore a Christian way of doing functional theology and ministry, "at that exciting point where Word, world, and baptized servant converge."

### **B5. Christian Worship**

This course surveys major aspects of the Sacraments, Lutheran liturgical worship, and the seasons of the church year with special emphasis on the cultural settings in which worship occurs. The course provides a practical understanding of the words, actions, and items involved in the services by giving a close examination of what is in our service books. It also ties the content of the services to their Biblical roots.

This course also looks at the wide diversity of Christian Worship practices within the ELCA from traditional to contemporary, multi-cultural differences, etc.

### **B6. Themes and Issues in Christian Ethics**

Students will reflect on the implications of the Ten Commandments for contemporary life. They will be introduced to concepts and systems by which the Christian tradition has taught personal and public morality, for example, the "Deadly Sins" and

"Cardinal Virtues", the "Just War" theory vs. Christian Pacifism, human nature and human sinfulness, and Luther's "Two Kingdoms" theology. The course provides opportunity for disciplined reflection on vexing ethical issues such as sexual ethics, sanctity of life, political witness, and economic justice. This course presents the opportunity to review and study some of the ELCA's Social and Teaching Statements.