



diakonia

...equipping the saints for diakonia; building up the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:12)

Program Overview and Course Descriptions

What is diakonia?

diakonia is a two year process of spiritual formation and theological education for adults. Participants have an opportunity to explore the mysteries and beauty of God, strengthen faith, and deepen one's sense of purpose/service. 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?

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 discern their spiritual gifts for ministry. 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 (*day of the week yet to be determined*). 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. **diakonia** uses a "pass/fail" grading system.

How much does diakonia cost?

- **Tuition:** \$360 per year (for the two year program) If tuition is paid up front, *pro rata* refunds are given for students who withdraw from the program. Tuition may be paid by class. **diakonia** has a financial aid program.
- **Books:** Actual costs vary from course to course, but instructors try to use books and materials totaling \$25 or less per course. Students have an option of buying their own materials used.
- **Retreats:** The number of retreats is determined by year, normally there is one. Recent retreats have cost less than \$50 per day or \$100 per weekend.
- **Fees:** A non-refundable registration fee of \$25 is required at time of registration. An additional fee of \$25 at the conclusion of the program covers graduation expenses, including the presentation of a commemorative **diakonia** cross.

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Course Outline

Two years of formation

Twelve five-session courses

Series A

A1. Introduction to the New Testament

The goals of this course are twofold: the class together will seek to understand the content and development of Christian faith and life in the first century Church as reflected in the canonical books of the NT; students will also seek to understand and use a variety of scholarly tools for biblical interpretation (including doing exegesis on a NT pericope). Attention will also be given to acquire sufficient background knowledge of NT themes and theology in order to evaluate contemporary commentaries and gain confidence in preparing biblical devotions. Throughout the course, students will reflect how the Gospel, as reflected in the NT, 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. Attention is given to the increasing role of theology and practice of this period in the ecumenical, liturgical, and organizational conversations of today's Church.

Included in this discussion is a study of Eucharistic Prayer, and how it incorporates the theology of the first 400 years of Christian thought.

A3. Practical Ministry I: Biblical Images of the Life of the Church

(diakonia, koinonia, leiturgia, kerygma)

This course spends time on each image presented, considering its exegetical derivation and usage in the New Testament, as well as 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 presence of Christ in our world and our Church. This course also introduces the idea of the priesthood of all believers and that we all have gifts that may be used. Teachers may spend time with students discerning possible gifts and ministries.

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, Justi-

fication 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: students will be provided the opportunity to make at least one supervised visit in institutions 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.

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 will 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 gain an understanding of the calling and vocation in the life of the Christian in order to create a balance between ecclesiastical service, family life, and secular work. Special attention will be given to the theology of sanctification, the Reformation, understanding of vocation in work, and family, the relation of the justified life to good works, financial stewardship, and the discipline of the daily prayer offices.

Series B

B1. Introduction to the Old Testament

The twin aims of this course are: to give the students an overview of the Hebrew Scriptures, with special attention to covenant theology and to relate Old Testament theology and history to the present, practical theology of the student.

B2. Christian Doctrine

This course has several main objectives: to introduce students to Systematic Theology, present a vision of the coherence of the doctrines to each other, help identify foundational doctrines, give an understanding of orthodoxy and heresy, gain an understanding of the communicational 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. The class will specifically focus on the biblical writings of John and Paul.

B3. Lutheran Faith in the American Context

The purpose of this course is to place the Lutheran confessional movement in the context of other Christian or non-Christian expressions in American history. Students will look at the history of religion

to understand the basic developments and schisms which have occurred in various American Christian sects. History will also be reviewed to understand its impact on today's church and society (such as the current debate regarding separation of church and state.) This class is also intended to help students witness and give a better and more informed account of the evangelical faith, and to help address the issue of "why am I a member of a church of the Augsburg Confession in this day and age?"

B4. Practical Ministry III: Communicating the Gospel

This series of workshops will explore the role of the parish community or 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 (evangelism, welcoming 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, 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 liturgical worship, with special emphasis on the cultural settings in which worship occurs. The course provides a practice 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 may cover some of the ELCA's social statements.