**LEARNING GOD’S STORY**

**A Discipleship Essential**

**BIG**

**The**

**GOD**

**STORY**

Living as faithful followers of Jesus requires us first to know who Jesus is and therefore to know the story of the God Jesus incarnates. If in baptism we are made children of God, then only by knowing who this God is and what this God has done can we figure out who we are and what we are to do. We meet both the God of Israel and God’s incarnation in Jesus through the Holy Scriptures.

Scripture itself makes it clear that 21st century Americans are hardly the first people to have lost track of who God is and what God has done and need a refresher course. The whole history of Israel is the story of a people who have forgotten what God has done for them – from the murmuring in the wilderness to the rebuilding of the temple. A whole subset of the Psalms is devoted to recounting the mighty acts of God, which indicates that the Israelites needed to be reminded regularly in worship of who God was and what God had done for them. In the New Testament, the kerygma about Jesus is often preceded by a recitation of the mighty acts of God in Israel (see Peter at Pentecost or Stephen’s speech at his martyrdom).

The 2007 ELCA Churchwide Assembly committed to the Book of Faith Initiative:

“The Book of Faith Initiative encourages and enables deeper and broader conversation about Scripture at the grassroots level. The Book of Faith Initiative is an invitation to do what we have always claimed we do: read, study, reflect, and meditate upon the Bible together.  Book of Faith is designed to initiate a conversation in your setting about how to get people to do what the tag line says: Open Scripture and Join the Conversation.”

Any attempt to encourage discipleship, to help people to live as faithful followers of Jesus, needs to be grounded in learning and understanding God’s story and then encouraging faith practices that grow out of our understanding of who God is and what God does based on this story.

**How might you encourage this among your congregation and people?**

* Provide resources for your congregation and individuals to read through the basic arc of scripture during this year.
* Identify resources that are available online, and multi-media for use by congregation participants in learning God’s big story.
* Provide a variety of ways to read – *One Year Bible, The Story* (Max Lucado and Randy Frazee), and the *Spark Story Bible*.
* Encourage people to use *The Story* as a framework for a kind of narrative lectionary for worship and/or Sunday School and provide supporting resources.
* Provide resources for small groups that can be either lay or clergy-led.
* Begin two new Bible Studies in your congregation this year.
* Prepare a basic outline/framework in place when making plans for fall programming.
* Encourage opportunities for reading and studying the Bible in local communities, among unchurched people.
* Provide on-line community forums for conversation, especially to encourage people who may not have congregational opportunities to participate.
* Provide links to existing Bible resources (e.g. EntertheBible from Luther Seminary) as well as resources produced here in the NJ Synod.

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